WILD WEST WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc OF WESTERN LIFE

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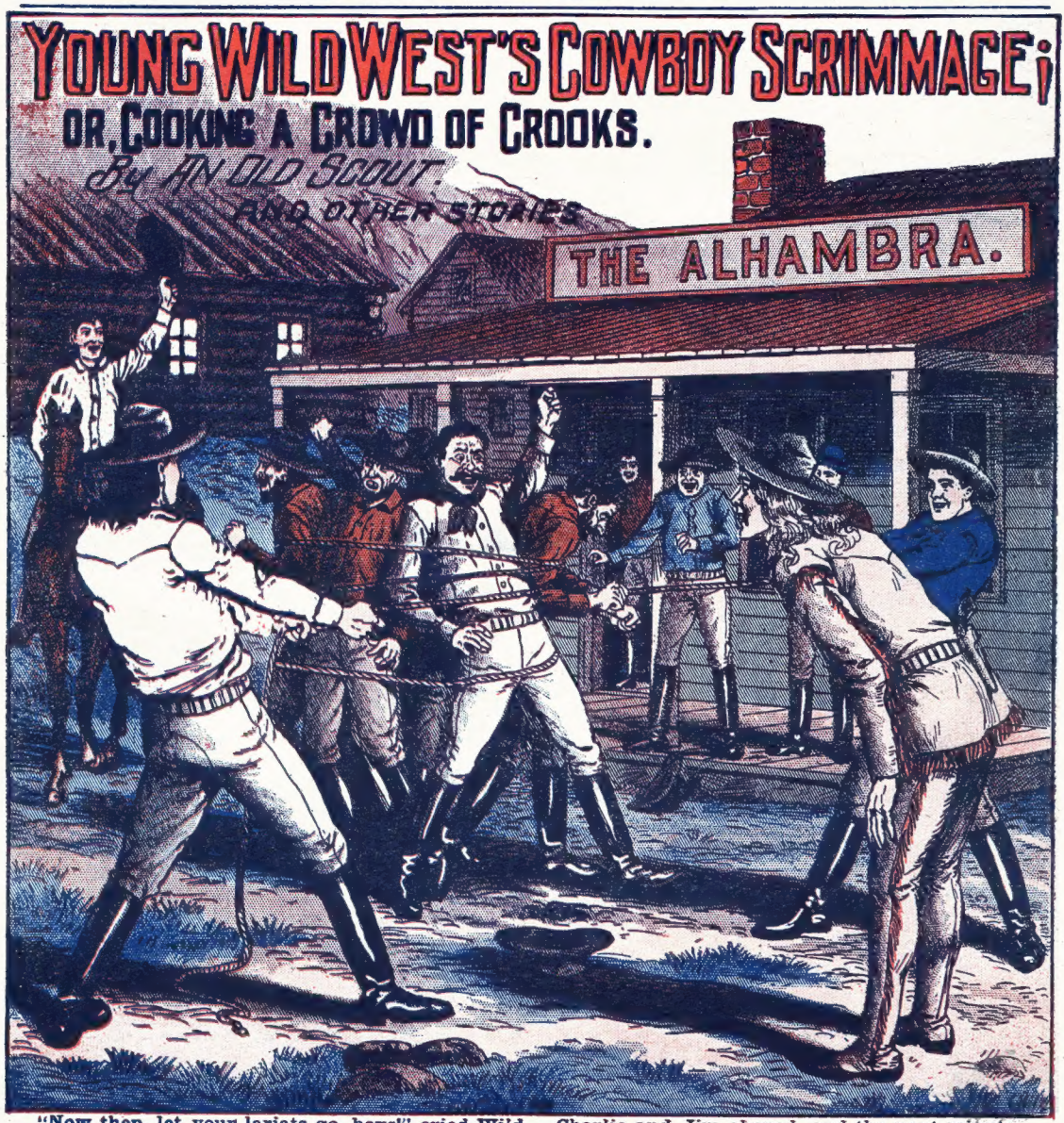
YOUNG WILD WEST'S COWBOY SCRIMMAGE;

OR, COOKING A CROWD OF CROOKS.

By AN OLD SCOUT.

AND OTHER STORIES



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Young Wild West's Cowboy Scrimmage

—OR—

COOKING A CROWD OF CROOKS

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

HOW THE COWBOYS WERE "ROPED."

Crack—crack! Cra-c-c-ck!

A volley of pistol shots rang out, followed by yells and shouts of laughter.

Young Wild West and his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, were just riding into the little mining town called Silver Shy, near the southern border of Montana.

Young Wild West and his partners had come up from Weston in the Black Hills to see about buying a big herd of cattle from a ranchman named Steve Gluck.

Gluck's ranch was located about ten miles from Silver Shy, and he had agreed to meet them at the Alhambra, the principal drinking and gambling saloon of the town.

"I guess there is something going on here, boys," Young Wild West remarked to his companions, as he urged the handsome sorrel stallion he was mounted upon to a faster gait. "We may as well hurry a little and see what it is."

It was toward the close of a summer day, and as the rays of the declining sun fell upon the three horsemen they made a dashing picture in the extreme.

Young Wild West, the perfect model of a young athlete, riding ahead with his long chestnut hair streaming in the wind, and clad in a tight-fitting suit of buckskin trimmed with scarlet fringe, looked to be just what he was—a typical boy of the wild West—one who knew not what fear was, and who could ride with the grace of a Centaur and shoot as straight as a die and as quick as a flash of lightning.

It was no wonder that this boy—for boy he was, since he had not yet reached twenty-one—had won the title of the Champion Deadshot of the West, and was commonly called the Prince of the Saddle.

He was all that Nature, aided by a careful training, could make of a male being! He was the ideal boy of the great and boundless wild West, which, at the time we are writing of, was in a very unsettled, not to say dangerous state.

Cheyenne Charlie, the ex-government scout and invincible Indian fighter, with his long black hair and drooping mustache, and Jim Dart, a stocky, well-built boy of perhaps twenty, made fitting companions, indeed, for the dashing young deadshot who knew no fear, and always kept his head, no matter what situation he was placed in.

They were attired in a manner similar to their young leader, and the horses they rode were the best that money could buy.

When they heard the shooting and yelling they were about a quarter of a mile away, and now they went dashing to the scene, raising a cloud of dust that made a fitting background to the picture they made.

There was only one highway that could be possibly called a street in Silver City, and this ran right through the center.

Rows of flat-roofed frame houses and shanties were on either side to the number of perhaps thirty, and nearly all of them were stores and saloons.

Scattered back of them in irregular form were shanties, many of which had never known what paint or whitewash was, and in these the citizens of the town lived with their families.

Silver mining was the principal industry there, though Silver Shy was a center for the ranches that were lying off almost in every direction from it.

As Young Wild West and his partners left the trail and dashed up the single street they came in sight of a crowd of cowboys, who were riding around in a circle and shooting in the air and yelling themselves hoarse.

"A lot of cowpunchers on a spree—that's all," said Cheyenne Charlie with a look of disgust. "They are harmless enough, I reckon. I didn't know but there was a free fight goin' on."

The three did not rein in their steeds until they were right in the midst of the reckless riders.

Then Young Wild West happened to look up and notice that the building before him had a sign denoting that it was the Alhambra.

This name for a saloon seemed to be very much in vogue in the West at the time of which we write, so it was nothing new to our friends.

"Clear ther track, you fancy-lookin' galoots!" yelled a broad-shouldered cowboy, as he dashed around on his mustang and gave Wild a push as he was in the act of dismounting and sent him staggering to the ground.

A hoarse burst of laughter followed this, and then the reckless riders to the number of a dozen swung in, broadening the circle they were riding in, and forcing our friends to get almost upon the low stoop of the saloon.

Young Wild West said not a word about the rough treatment he had received until the cowboys came to a halt a moment later and made a rush for the bar to get some more tanglefoot, as they called the fiery liquor that was sold there.

Then, as the broad-shouldered fellow swaggered up, he suddenly faced him and said:

"Say, what did you push me for? I wasn't in your way, was I?"

"Wasn't in my way, hey?" roared the man, stopping stock still and eyeing the boy with drunken gravity. "Why, sonny, I reckon everybody's in my way! Look out! I'm goin' ter rustle yer!"

With that he made a grab for Wild.

But he made a wrong calculation, for instead of getting

hold of him, he received a blow from a clenched fist that sent him staggering.

"You can't rustle me, you big bluffer!" said our hero calmly. "You can have all the fun you want, but don't interfere with me. I won't have it! Just behave yourself now, or I'll flatten your nose for you!"

Only a few saw and heard this, but they quickly let the rest know what was transpiring.

The noise stopped almost immediately, and the crowd watched the broad-shouldered man to see what he would do.

The blow must have jarred him considerably, and between that and the bold front Wild put on he was temporarily stunned.

But he was not long recovering himself.

"You hit me, you young galoot!" he cried savagely, "an' I'm jest goin' ter strip that fancy buckskin suit off yer an' pound yer till you're black an' blue. Look out fur me! I'm Bug Hinks, an' I'm a terror from Gluck's ranch."

Young Wild West did not wait a second after the words were out of the blusterer's mouth.

He sailed right into him, and caught him with right and left on the stomach and face.

Down went Bug Hinks in a confused heap, gasping for his breath and holding on his stomach with both hands.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Wild, smiling at him as though he was surprised. "What are you sitting down there for? Get up and tear my clothes off! Hurry up!"

The cowboy was unable to make a reply just then.

Our hero had hit him hard, and no one knew better how and where to hit a man who needed it.

Young Wild West was an all-around athlete, as well as a deadshot with a rifle or revolver.

The bunch of cowboys were thunderstruck at what had happened.

They looked first at Wild and then at their fallen leader.

"Git up, Bug," said one. "It must have been an accident."

"If you think it was an accident, you just try to tear the clothes off me, and we'll see how you'll make out," answered Wild.

"Oh, I won't tear ther clothes off yer, but I'll jest slap your snoot fur yer!" was the quick retort, and with a leap the cowboy made for him.

Biff!

Wild let out a straight right, and the fellow brought up against it with full force.

His head struck the ground first, and for a second he was perfectly still.

Then he rolled over and crawled away, the crowd laughing and jeering the while.

Even his own friends enjoyed the scene.

They realized that the dashing young fellow with the long chestnut hair was a very hard proposition, and they thought it great fun to see the two men get fooled.

Bug Hinks now got up.

But he did not offer to renew the fight.

He quietly slunk away and got into the barroom of the saloon by a rear door.

A howl of derision went up from those whom he had been riding about with.

Five of them got out in the road and began yelling and shooting again.

They fired without regard to how close the bullets came to the heads of those standing around.

The crowd quickly scattered.

"Whoop! We're ther boys, an' don't yer furgit it!" yelled one, and he let a shot go that was not more than two or three feet over Cheyenne Charlie's head.

"Stop that!" cried the scout. "You'll keep on till you hit some one, an' then you'll git your medicine!"

"Whoop!"

Another shot was fired, and the bullet hit the ground near Dart's feet.

"Get your lariats, boys, and rope that gang in," said Young Wild West. "They are getting a little bit dangerous."

Charlie and Jim quietly took the lariats that were hanging from their saddle horns.

Nearly every one saw the move, and they looked for something to happen.

The five cowboys were now dancing wildly about, shouting themselves hoarse and inviting somebody to fight them.

"Whoop!" shouted one. "Bug Hinks sneaked away, but we won't move till we git good an' ready! Let's see ther four galoots what kin make us stop!"

"Now, then, let your lariats go, boys!" cried Wild.

Charlie and Jim obeyed, and the next minute the five cowboys were caught and wound in a bunch.

Yells and peals of laughter went up from the crowd of bystanders, while Wild simply smiled.

Dart and the scout had simply lasooed them, and then made their way around them in opposite directions, keeping the lariats taut until they had them where they wanted them.

The five reckless fellows were so astonished at what had happened to them that they dropped their revolvers.

"You're a fine lot, I must say!" said our hero, with a laugh. "Now, just show us how you can dance while you are in that bunch. Go on, or I'll begin to shoot the straps off your boots!"

Crack!

He whipped out his revolver and fired so quickly that a murmur of astonishment went up from those who witnessed it.

The bullet hit the strap of a boot on one of the gang, and feeling it graze his leg, he let out a yell.

"Go on and dance! I mean business! You fellows thought you were going to scare everybody around here, but you didn't succeed. Now I am going to have some fun with you! Dance!"

Crack!

He fired another shot, this time with his other revolver, which he held in his left hand.

"Wow!" yelled one of the men, as he felt the bullet graze the top of his boot. "Come on, boys! let's dance!"

All but one promptly started in at dancing.

The fellow who did not had a revolver in his belt, and he managed to get it out.

He was in the act of firing at Wild when——

Crack!

Our hero fired his third shot, and with a howl of pain the cowboy dropped his shooter.

"I didn't hurt him," said Wild, turning to a bystander with a smile. "I only grazed his hand, just enough to make him drop his shooter. He'll dance, all right."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the fellow started in with the rest.

It was the greatest sight that had ever been witnessed in Silver Shy.

The five men cut a ridiculous figure as they jumped up and down.

"Looks like a big spider, there's so many legs dancin' around together," observed Cheyenne Charlie.

Wild kept them at it for fully five minutes, and then told them to stop.

CHAPTER II.

OCTOBER GALE, THE SHOEMAKER, ARRIVES IN TOWN.

"Say, I'll bet I know who you are!" exclaimed a miner, rushing up to our hero, as Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart proceeded to unwind their lariats from the five cowboys.

The speaker had arrived on the scene just in time to see the finish.

"Well," answered Wild, looking at him, "it strikes me that I have seen you somewhere. It is quite likely that you do know me."

"You're Young Wild West, an' you kin whip any bunch of galoots what ever got together!"

"Well, I am Young Wild West, right enough, but I don't know about the other."

"Yes, yer do! You knows very well that you ain't afraid of anything that ever walked! How are yer, anyhow? I'm Bill Beck; I met you out at Phipps Run, an' you helped ter git a store goin' there. Don't yer remember me?"

"Yes, I remember you now, Beck. But what are you doing here? Didn't the store pay?"

"Yes, it paid all right, but I got it in my foolish head that I wanted to sell out, an' I did. I spent all ther money I had, an' then I headed fur here. I'm doin' putty well now—ten dollars a day as foreman of a mine here. How are yer, Cheyenne Charlie? How are yer, Jim Dart?"

They recognized Beck now, and they shook hands with him heartily.

The five cowboys had hied to the interior of the tavern as soon as they were released.

Like their leader, they did not look for any redress.

Beck was pretty well known in the town, for every one seemed to have a friendly feeling toward him.

"Boys, I want ter introduce yer ter Young Wild West, ther whitest an' best young feller that ever straddled a horse!" he called out, as he turned around and looked at the crowd of spectators.

A cheer went up from some one, and then nearly everybody joined in.

"An' these here fellers is Young Wild West's pards, Cheyenne Charlie an' Jim Dart, boys!" the miner exclaimed. "They done me a mighty good turn once, an' I won't never furgit it!"

There was more cheering at this.

But Beck was not done yet.

"Young Wild West is ther Prince of ther Saddle, an' he's ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, too!" he exclaimed. "He kin lick his weight in wildcats, an' he don't know what it is ter be afraid. Jest give him three rousin' cheers now!"

It is hardly necessary to state that the cheers were given with a will.

The only ones who did not join in the cheering were the cowboys.

As has already been stated there were a dozen of them.

And as Bug Hinks had given it out that he was from Gluck's ranch, it was quite likely that our friends would see more of the gang, since that was the place they were bound for.

"Git your horses an' come over ter my shanty, boys," said Beck. "You'll jest be in time fur supper. We've got plenty of bacon, corn meal, an' potatoes, besides dried bear meat, chicken that are alive, an' coffee an' sugar. I reckon my wife kin git up a meal fur us in short order. Come right on! Don't say no, now!"

The invitation was such a pressing one that our friends could not very well refuse.

They got their horses and led them along with the miner, no one offering to interfere with them.

The little house that Beck lived in was not very far distant, and when they got there they found his wife standing in the doorway.

The good woman was surprised to learn that she was going to have company for supper, but as soon as she had been introduced she started in to get the meal ready.

"I've got a shed back here that will accommodate your horses," said Beck. "Jest fetch 'em around. I had a nag of my own when I come here, but ther blamed critter took a notion ter die, an' he jest died. It wasn't much loss, 'cause he wasn' anything like them horses of yourn."

The three horses were soon comfortably stalled, and given some feed.

Then all hands went into the shanty.

"I ain't got no room fur yer ter sleep here, Wild," observed the miner, as he pointed out the interior of the little building. "There's only two small rooms, an' one we cook an' live in, an' one ter sleep in."

"Well, I guess we'll find a place to sleep at, all right," retorted Wild. "We may as well stay here to-night, I suppose. We are on our way to Gluck's ranch. Do you know where it is, Beck?"

"Ten miles to ther southeast. That gang of drunken cowboys was from there. They're a bad lot, an' so is Gluck, I've heard. But he's a great raiser of cattle, for all that."

"Well, I want to buy a herd of him, if they are all right. We are going to drive them down to Roaring Ranch in Wyoming, near the border line of the Black Hills."

"Well, I reckon you kin do business with Gluck. He's a putty rough feller, they say, an' don't think nothin' of shootin' a man. But you kin manage him if any one kin."

"Well, there won't be any managing about it. If he has got the cattle I want and wants me to buy them at the price he puts on them there will be no trouble about it. I will pay the money and take the cattle."

"But how are yer goin' ter git 'em away?"

"He is to furnish the men to deliver them."

"Oh! That's where the trouble will come in, then. He'll send jest sich a gang as you seen over at ther Alhambra ter do it."

"Well, I don't care who he sends. They will do the job, just the same."

Supper was ready in a little while, and they all sat down and partook of it.

"Gluck ought to be in town by this time," said Wild, after the meal was over. "I guess we had better go over and see."

Leaving their horses where they were, they walked down to the saloon.

They were just in time to see a horseman ride up with enough trappings on his steed to fit out a couple more, and Cheyenne Charlie gave a nod and exclaimed:

"There's a galoot what thinks he's somethin', I'll bet!"

With a jingle and clatter ther horse came up.

"Whoa, Primrose!" bawled the horseman, and then he dismounted.

Throwing the bridle-rein over the horse's head, he strode into the saloon, a pair of old-fashioned Mexican spurs jingling at his heels.

"Look out, there, you sleepy lot of galoots!" he yelled. "So here's where yer are, hey? Wanted a day off jest ter go on a spree, did yer? Well, jest see to it that yer show up all right in ther mornin', that's all I want ter say! Scupples, jest give ther galoots a drink at my expense. I never allows a cowboy what's workin' fur me ter say he ain't got a good boss!"

"Hooray fur Steve Gluck!" shouted the fellow Wild had knocked down after giving Bug Hinks his medicine. "He's the boss rancher of ther country. Three cheers, boys!"

The whole bunch of reckless riders was in the saloon, and they yelled as if in one voice.

Wild and his partners now knew that the new arrival was the man they wanted to see.

But our hero did not go in right away.

As the scout looked down the mountain trail he noticed a wagon approaching rather slowly.

Two buckskin mules were pulling it along, and they were taking their time about it.

The vehicle had a top on it like an old-fashioned prairie schooner, though not so large.

As the team of mules neared the heart of the little town the driver started them on a jog, and then with a squeaking and clattering the outfit came up.

The Alhambra was bound to attract the attention of a stranger.

It really looked as though it was the best place to stop at in the town.

The driver did not need to call out "whoa!" to his team, for when he steered them in toward the public house they came to a halt at the drinking trough, just as though they knew they had reached their destination.

A smooth-faced man of sixty sat on the seat in front of the wagon and looked around him rather curiously.

"What place is this?" he asked half a minute later.

"Silver Shy," answered somebody.

"Good enough! That's the town I was headin' fur. How be you all?"

"Putty good, I reckon," answered the man who had given him the information he asked for.

"Well, I'm right glad of that. My name is October Gale, an' I'm a shoemaker. Boots or shoes soled an' heeled fur two dollars. Repairin' of all kinds neatly done. Soles pegged, nailed or sewed, ther price is ther same. Hey, there! Landlord, send some one out here ter show me where ter put up my rig. I'm goin' ter stay at this tavern all night."

This was rattled off so fast that the hearers could just catch it, and that was all.

But the words were loud enough to be heard inside.

Out came the owner of the place, followed by several of the cowboys.

The instant the latter saw the mule wagon and the smooth-faced man sitting on the seat a howl went up.

It was something new for Silver Shy, and forgetting all about how they had been called by Young Wild West, some of the rascally cowboys jerked their revolvers and began to fire at the top of the wagon.

Out came the rough-and-ready fellow who had been called Steve Gluck.

"Hold on, there, boys!" he bellowed in a deep voice.

The shooting and yelling stopped right away.

Wild and his partner thought the ranchman must be quite a sensible fellow, after all.

But then soon found out their mistake.

Steve Gluck stepped up to the driver, who showed signs of fright, and putting out his hand, exclaimed:

"How are yer, stranger?"

"How—how are yer?" was the reply, and October Gale, the shoemaker, put out his hand.

The instant he got a grip upon it the ranchman gave a jerk and pulled the man out of the wagon.

"I'm awful glad ter meet yer!" and the ranchman, who was a big, powerful man, shook the shoemaker's hand so hard that his teeth almost rattled.

Then he gave him a whirl and sent him spinning straight for the horse trough.

Splash!

October Gale landed on his back in the trough, and the water flew in every direction.

"Now, then, boys of Gluck's ranch, jest pepper that old emigrant wagon!" yelled the ranch owner.

"Hold on!"

Young Wild West thought it was about time to interfere.

The cowboys heard the voice, and they instantly fixed their eyes upon the daring young deadshot.

They did not make a move to shoot.

"You have gone just far enough, my friend," said Wild, walking over to Gluck. "Just take it easy, now!"

CHAPTER III.

WILD SHOWS THE CROWD HOW HE CAN SHOOT.

Steve Gluck kicked his heels together and the spurs on them jingled.

"Whoop!" he shouted. "What in thunder is this, boys?"

"It's Young Wild West, Steve," answered Bug Hinks, with just the vestige of a grin on his face.

The broad-shouldered cowboy was evidently itching to see his boss get something like he himself had received.

"Young Wild West, hey?"

The ranchman's jaw dropped, and he stared at Wild.

"That's who I happen to be," said our hero coolly. "You are Steve Gluck, I suppose?"

"Yes, that's me."

"Well, don't you think you went a little too far when you threw that old man in the horse trough? It was bad enough to pull him off the wagon the way you did!"

"But what is it your business how fur I go?" cried Gluck, his brow darkening.

"I consider it my business always to take the part of those who can't do it themselves. What show has that old shoemaker got with you and this rascally gang of yours?"

"What show have you got with 'em, either?"

"Oh, I can take care of the whole crowd, if it comes to the point, I guess. If I can't do it alone, I have got two partners to help me."

"Yer think three of yer kin take care of thirteen, then?"

"I haven't the least doubt of it. Ask Bug Hinks his opinion about it?"

"What does he mean, Bug?" queried the ranchman, turning to the big cowboy, who was grinning broadly now.

"I reckon he kin come putty near ter doin' what he says, Steve," he answered.

"What! Are yer crazy, you big, lazy galoot?"

"No, Steve, I ain't crazy, but I got an awful lickin' from that there young feller what calls himself Young Wild West an hour ago. He's ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, they do say, but I know fur a fact that he kin lick me with his fists."

"A boy like that lick ther terror of Steve Gluck's ranch? How about it, boys?"

"He done it," said the fellow who had went down so easily before our hero after Bug Hinks had been disposed of. "He done it, boss, an' he done ther same ter me. Then he jest made his pards ter rope five more of ther gang, and he shot a shooter out of Dan Jones' hand, an' made the whole bunch dance a roarin' tenderfoot dance. Young Wild West is all wool an' a yard wide, boss!"

Steve Gluck was staggered.

By this time the old shoemaker had got out of the horse trough and righted himself up.

"You're a pesky rascal!" he cried, rushing up to his tormentor. "I've got a notion ter have yer arrested."

"Take it easy, Mr. Gale," said Wild, with a smile. "I guess the landlord will supply you with some dry clothes. It isn't as bad as it might have been, you know."

"No, it ain't as bad as it might have been, that's so. But it's bad enough. I've got dry clothes in ther wagon, so that part is all right. I'm much obliged to yer, boy. I'll sole an' heel your boots fur nothin', blamed if I won't!"

"Oh, I won't allow you to do that. I always pay for anything I have done in that line."

Steve Gluck started to walk up and down excitedly.

"I've got ter lick somebody!" he bawled out. "I've got ter fill some one full of lead!"

"You couldn't lick a sick cat!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, who was itching to take a hand in the game. "You couldn't make a water pail leak at ten yards, you couldn't! You're a big bluff, straight from Blufftown!"

"I'll bet yer twenty dollars I kin lick you inside of five minutes!" retorted the ranchman, diving into his pocket and fetching out a roll of bills.

"I'll take your bet!" answered the scout, and produced the money and handed it to the proprietor of the place.

"It's a go! I'll jest give you a good wallopin', an' then I'll make Young Wild West either stand on his head or be shot full of holes!"

Wild was satisfied to let Charlie have a try at the blustering ranch owner.

Without any further preliminaries the two men went at it.

As neither had discarded the weapons from their belts, it was apt to be any kind of a fight before they got done.

But Young Wild West did not propose to allow any shooting.

Only one of the cowboys needed watching, he thought, and that was the fellow he had disarmed by shooting the revolver from his hand when the bunch was wound up with the lariats.

He had been named by one of his companions as Dan Jones, and our hero really thought that he would be none too good to fire a sly shot if he got the opportunity.

"Keep your eye on that fellow, Jim," he whispered, pointing him out.

"All right," was the reply.

It was at that moment that Charlie and Gluck started to fight.

The ranchman aimed a savage blow at the face of the scout, but up went Charlie's arm and it glanced off, doing no damage.

Biff!

Charlie landed a good one on the neck of his opponent, and sent him staggering.

He followed it with a rush, and Gluck grabbed him about the waist as he received a hard blow in the face.

Down they went, Charlie underneath.

But he had hardly landed before he whirled his adversary over.

He got a collar hold with his right hand, and began bumping Gluck's head on the ground.

"Let him up, Charlie!" called out Wild. "Fight it out fair and square. You can whip a stage-coach load of such fellows as he is!"

"I reckon you're right, Wild," retorted the scout, and then he got up.

Gluck was on his feet in a twinkling.

The cowboys remained remarkably still, but the crowd of miners that had gathered yelled with delight.

A fight of that kind was a treat to them.

Biff! Biff!

Both landed heavy blows on the body, and then parted.

Gluck's eye was beginning to swell at a lively rate.

As Charlie made a dive for him he jumped out of the way and drew his knife from his belt.

Crack!

Young Wild West fired quickly.

The bullet hit the hilt of the knife and sent it flying from the ranchman's hand, giving him a sort of electric shock at the same time.

"It's two on one, boys!" he yelled. "Jump in an' clean 'em out!"

"Hold!" cried Young Wild West, in a ringing tone of voice. "I guess it isn't two to one. You were going to knife my partner and I wouldn't let you, that's all. But if any of your gang wants to take a hand in the game, let them. We are ready for anything that turns up!"

Just then Charlie succeeded in landing a heavy blow between the eyes of the ranchman, and down he went in a senseless condition.

"Hurrah!" shouted October Gale. "That beats anything I ever seen! Mister, I'll fix your boots fur nothin', goshswizzled if I don't! You licked that blusterin' rascal too nice fur anything."

Wild stepped over to Steve Gluck, as he saw that he was recovering.

"I would like to talk business with you as soon as you feel fit, Mr. Gluck," he said, just as though nothing had happened.

The fallen ranchman looked at him in a puzzled way for fully half a minute.

Then it must have all come to him, for he said:

"All right, Young Wild West."

Bug Hings took pity on his boss and helped him to his feet.

"I feel as though a landslide hit me," said the ranchman. "How was it, anyhow, Bug?"

"It was fair an' square, Steve," was the reply. "We know what Young Wild West an' one of his pards kin do, anyhow, so I reckon we'd better not try ter find out what ther other one is made of."

The two walked into the Alhambra, Gluck moving rather slowly, not to say painfully.

The knife Wild had shot from the ranchman's hand lay where it had fallen.

A miner stepped over and picked it up.

"What do yer think of that, boys?" he called out, holding the weapon so all near him could see it. "There's ther mark of ther bullet on ther handle. Split ther buckhorn, by gum!"

"It wasn't such a wonderful thing to do," Wild averred, seeing that every one was looking at him, as though expecting him to say something. "If you want me to, I'll show you a good shot."

"Hooray!" came from a dozen throats at once.

Young Wild West had surely won that crowd.

Of course, the cowboys did not like him, but they had the utmost respect for him.

"You have got enough nerve to hold that knife against the tree over there, so the edge of the blade is toward me, while I shoot at it, haven't you?" Wild asked the miner who had picked up the weapon.

"I reckon I have!" was the quick reply.

"All right. I'll show you how easy it is to split a bullet, then."

There were some pretty good shots in that crowd, but they did not count themselves as being much just then.

There was a placard tacked to the tree Wild had referred to, and leading the way to it, he showed the miner how he wanted him to hold the knife.

Then he stepped back about twenty feet and raised his revolver.

Crack!

The knife in the miner's hand was seen to move slightly.

"By ther great boots!" he yelled. "Ther bullet got cut square in two, an' each side of it went through ther card half an inch from ther blade! What do yer think of that, boys?"

The men rushed forward to see.

But the miner had told the truth.

Wild had split the bullet, sure enough.

It was so near dark at the time that it seemed as though it was hardly possible for him to see to aim straight.

But Wild had a very keen pair of eyes, and so long as he could see the object he wanted to hit he was bound to do it when he pulled the trigger.

It was really a wonderful shot, but nothing new for him.

The miners were so delighted that they wanted to pick him up and carry him around on their shoulders.

But he laughingly told them that he did not like anything like that, and they desisted.

Only two or three of the cowboys had witnessed the shot, and they hastened inside the saloon to tell about it.

The gang feared the daring boy more than ever now.

"You're the real article, all right!" exclaimed October Gale. "Now, I'll jest take my team around an' have 'em put away; an' then I'll put on some dry clothes an' see what ther landlord kin give me fur supper."

The old man followed the hostler to the rear of the premises, leading the mules, and, realizing that he was the cause of the exhibition of wonderful shooting, the crowd gave him a rousing cheer.

CHAPTER IV.

STEVE GLUCK'S GAME.

Steve Gluck was a badly beaten man, and very crestfallen, at that.

He did not stop at the bar when Bug Hinks led him into the Alhambra, but insisted in going to a small back room and sitting down at a table.

There was nothing very strange in the fact that the five cowboys who had been "roped" by Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart followed him.

They could sympathize with him, because they had "been there."

The room was devoid of any one until they got there, so they pulled up chairs and sat down around the table.

"Ther first thing in order is a drink, boys," said the ranchman, feeling of his swollen eye rather tenderly. "Then I want one of you galoots ter git me a basin of water an' a rag."

Bug went out and got a bottle and some glasses.

Then he hied to the kitchen and soon had the water.

After Gluck had swallowed his tanglefoot he allowed the big cowboy to wash him off with the cold water.

It made him feel better.

They could hear the miners yelling themselves hoarse outside, but they paid little attention.

The humorous part of it was now over.

It might have been a little satisfaction to the seven who had been tamed by Young Wild West to see their boss got an awful dose of the same medicine, but now that it was over, they were as bitter against the young deadshot as the ranchman was.

They had all been pulled down several pegs, and it was not natural that they should feel good over it.

"Boys," said Steve Gluck, "I come ter Silver Shy ternight fur two reasons. One was ter meet Young Wild West an' sell him a herd of cattle, an' ther other was ter meet an' old friend of mine what's got a very putty darter. They're comin' in on ther stage-coach, which are due here at nine. I thought I might as well tell yer about this, 'cause I don't want none of yer ter insult ther gal when she goes over ter ther ranch. Her father is in hard luck, an' I offered him a job on ther ranch, an' told him ter fetch ther gal along an' let her make herself useful ter ther housekeeper. It may be that she'll fall in love with me, boys, an' if she does, an' I like her, we'll have one of ther hottest times that was ever heard of around these here diggings! But I'm gittin' away from ther p'int, I reckon. What I wanted ter say ther most is about this Young Wild West. That young galoot is no good around here, he ain't. I'll jest sell him that herd of cattle, an' then I'll git 'em back in no time! Somethin's got ter happen ter him an' his pards, boys! Do yer understand what I mean?"

The villainous ranchman had been talking in low tones, but he raised his voice to a high pitch as the last few words were spoken.

"Hush, Steve!" cautioned Bug Hinks. "We understands yer, all right."

Gluck looked at the door apprehensively.

Evidently he thought Young Wild West might be there, for he shut up instantly.

There were two tables in the room besides the one they were seated at, and the miners now began coming in, since the excitement outside was over.

In a few minutes two poker games were in progress in the back room and the faro bank in the barroom was open and ready for business.

The cowboys started in to gambling, and in their eagerness to win money soon forgot about Young Wild West.

Soon Steve Gluck and his men had to move from the table in order to make room for some card players.

The ranchman got up and walked out into the main room.

One of the first persons he saw there was Young Wild West.

Wild had been waiting for him to come out for several minutes, he having heard that he was in the back room.

"Well, Mr. Gluck," said the boy, "I would like to have a look at your cattle to-morrow."

"All right, Mr. West, you kin jest ride over in ther mornin', an' when you git there you'll soon find out that I ain't done no exaggeratin' about 'em. I'll stick ter everything I said in my letter ter yer. Ther cattle are in first-class condition, an' there'll be no trouble in drivin' 'em down ter your ranch."

"You are to deliver them, as you wrote you would do, providing I bought them."

"Sartin, I will, but I expect you ter go along with ther boys an' give 'em a lift now an' then, when things goes a little wrong."

"Oh, I expect to ride right along with the herd," Wild assured him.

"Good! I guess the sale is as good as made, then."

"Well, I will ride over to your ranch to-morrow morning," said Wild, and with that he left the place, much to the relief of the rascally ranchman.

As yet our friends had made no arrangements for a place to sleep, so they decided to stop at the Alhambra if they could get accommodations there.

Wild asked the landlord and found that they could have a room between the three of them, but that they would have to sleep on the floor.

This was good enough, for travelers were lucky to get a room, let alone a bed.

"I guess our horses will be just as safe over at Bill Beck's as they would be here," Jim Dart remarked.

"Yes," nodded our hero.

"They'll be better off," declared the scout; "'cause there ain't no other horses there in ther shed. They'll have things all ter themselves. I reckon I'll take a walk over an' see how they're makin' out."

This was considered a good idea by Wild and Dart, so Charlie at once left the tavern.

He came back a few minutes later, and reported everything all right.

They had heard about the expected arrival of the stagecoach with the mail, so they remained outside and waited for it to come along.

It was a few minutes after nine when the rumbling of the outfit was heard, and a couple of minutes later the stagecoach appeared.

It went past the Alhambra a short distance, and came to a stop at the supply store, which also bore a sign declaring it was the post-office.

Many of the miners came out of the saloon and went over to see who came.

None of the cowboys did, but Steve Gluck felt himself duty bound to do so, since he expected friends.

The ranchman felt ashamed of his swollen countenance, but he resolved to make a reasonable excuse for his appearance and smooth things over all he could.

Wild and his partners noticed that the villain went over, so they concluded to go and see what attraction there was there for him.

When they came up close to the outfit they saw Gluck shaking hands with an elderly man and a young lady. Judging by the looks of the new arrivals, they were not over-prosperous.

The clothing of the man was worn and frayed, and the style of the young lady's attire was rather ancient, even for Silver Shy.

But both were very neat looking.

"I am awful glad to meet you, Steve," said the man, when they had done shaking hands. "I was a little afraid that you wouldn't be here when the stage arrived, and then we wouldn't have known what to do. We've cleaned up the last of our money, you know."

"Is that so, Billy? Well, I reckon you'll soon be makin' some. I'll pay you just what you're worth on ther ranch, an' ther wages up here ain't what might be called mean. Ther gal kin earn something besides her board, too. I ain't what might be called a very presentable object, am I? I had a fall from my horse while ridin' over along toward night, an' it bruised me up somewhat."

"Never mind that," spoke up the girl. "I can tell by your looks that you are kind-hearted."

"Well, I reckon you've got that right, miss—what in thunder is your darter's name, Billy Egbert?"

"Jennie is her name," was the quick reply. "She's ther only child I've got left, an' she's ther image of her mother, who has been dead these three years. I've been in hard luck ever since, Steve, an' when you answered my letter an' told me to come up here I felt that I had a chance ter begin all over ag'in."

"An' that you have, Billy. Kin ther gal ride horseback?"

"Yes, she's done quite a little of it in her day."

"Well, I'll borrer a couple of horses, then, an' we'll ride over to ther ranch. It's only ten miles below here."

"I will be very glad when we get there," said the girl, "for I am pretty tired."

"An' hungry, too," ventured her father.

"Hungry, did yer say?" cried Gluck. "Well, jest come right over to ther Alhambra an' we'll soon have somethin' ter eat fur yer. You kin bet no one don't go hungry, not when I knows it!"

The ranchman was surely making out that he was a white man, all the way through."

"Well," said Wild, "I wouldn't give much for the chances of the man and his daughter. I have an idea that Steve Gluck is no good. Even now I'll bet he is working up some villainy."

"Jest see how polite he was to that gal," spoke up Charlie. "Ther chances is that he sent fur Egbert, as he calls him, jest because he found a young woman for a darter."

"That is about the way I would figure it out, Charlie," remarked Jim Dart.

They walked back to the tavern and sat down on the stoop.

Half an hour later the ranchman and his two guests came out, and mounting the horses that were brought around for them, rode away.

"Well, I guess we'll turn in now, boys," said Wild. "I want to make an early start for Gluck's in the morning, and we may as well enjoy sleep when we've got the chance."

They slept pretty sound, in spite of the fact that their bed was a pretty hard one.

They were among the first to arise the next morning, and were glad to find that it was going to be a fine day.

Everything was as quiet as though they were camped in the midst of a forest when Wild walked out in front of the Alhambra and took a look around the town.

Some of the inhabitants were not up yet, but the more thrifty ones already had smoke rising from the chimneys of their houses.

The bar part of the tavern opened while our hero was standing outside.

"Want ter git a drink?" asked the man who opened the door.

"No," answered the young deadshot.

"I thought yer did. I seen yer standin' there, an' I made up my mind that I must be late in openin' up."

"Well, it is only five o'clock, so I guess that isn't very late. Say, did the cowboys who were having such a hot time last night go away?"

"Yes, they went about an hour ago, so ther feller said what was 'tendin' bar all night. Some of 'em was so drunk that they had ter be lifted in ther saddle, so he said."

"Oh, well, that's their way of having fun, I suppose."

"Yes, gittin' drunk an' makin' things hum is their way. But they sorter got took down by you fellers last night, didn't they?"

"They deserved all they got, I guess."

"Sartin, they did. Every one says that. Steve Gluck was ther worst s'prised man in ther bunch, though. My! but didn't you give it to him!" and the man looked at the scout and nodded grinningly.

Just then there was a clatter of hoofs, and around the corner of the building came a mule with a man on its back.

It was October Gale, out for a little morning exercise.

He sat on the mule without any saddle, and appeared to be perfectly at his ease.

"Mornin', gents!" he called out. "So I ain't ther only one up, hey? I thought I was. Jest took a notion ter ride around an' see what Silver Shy looks like. This here mule of mine is used ter bein' straddled by me. He likes it as much as he does bein' hitched ter ther wagon. Git-ap!"

The mule laid back his ears, gave a switch of the tail, and started off on a lazy trot.

"He's a comical galoot, ain't he?" remarked Cheyenne Charlie, with a grin.

"Yes," said Jim. "But I'll bet he'll make out all right at his trade here. I don't believe there is a shoemaker in the town."

"A fellow like him is bound to make a living, no matter where he goes," retorted Wild. "You can see that he has got the push in him to do it."

They took a walk over to Bill Beck's to see how their horses were making out, and found the miner and his wife just sitting down to breakfast.

They refused the pressing invitation to eat with them, since they had engaged breakfast at the hotel, and then went around to the shed.

The horses were all right, so they concluded to take them over and give them a drink at the trough and let them be there till they got ready to go away.

Beck must have given them feed when he first got up, for they were just finishing when their owners came up.

Half an hour later our friends had their breakfast, and then they mounted and set out for Steve Gluck's ranch.

Just what sort of a time they were going to have when they got there they did not know.

CHAPTER V.

THE COOKING OF THE CROWD OF RCOOKS BEGINS.

As they had been told the way to go to reach the ranch, Wild and his partners rode at a sharp canter.

The horses were anxious to go, so they let them have their way.

Ten miles is considered a very short ride on the prairies.

It was only a short "spell" in the saddle, as Cheyenne Charlie put it.

As Gluck's place was the first they would strike, they knew they had arrived at their destination the moment they reached a cluster of tumble-down buildings and saw smoke coming out of a chimney.

They had seen plenty of cattle grazing all along the way after leaving Silver Shy, and they supposed they belonged to Gluck, which was indeed the case.

Instead of riding up to the ranch-house, they made for the big cattle pen near it, where a solitary man stood leaning against a post.

He was watching them, and when they dismounted he bade them a cheery good-morning, which seemed rather out of place for one of Gluck's men to do, they thought.

"You're Young Wild West, ain't yer?" asked the man, who was not more than twenty-one and of a very good-looking appearance.

"Yes," answered our hero, as he dismounted.

"Well, afore you go any further I want ter tell yer that every man on this ranch ain't a crook."

Wild was surprised at this.

"What do you mean?" he asked, looking sharply at the man.

"Well, I jest made up my mind ter tell you all about it, an' I'll tell yer right now that there's a crowd of crooks on this ranch."

"Well, I have found out something like that, my friend," Wild answered. "We have been in contact with the crooks you speak of already."

"So I heard last night. But see here! I ain't no crook. An' I ain't goin' ter see you three fellers cleaned out of your money, an' most likely wiped out, too! I ain't goin' ter allow it, I tell yer. I'm goin' ter warn yer."

"Thank you. I guess you mean all right. What is your name, please?"

"Frank Totten is my name. I've only been at work here three weeks, an' I'm tryin' mighty hard ter stick it out till my month's up."

"So you think Steve Gluck and his crowd mean to fix us, do you?"

"I don't only think it, I know it!"

"Ah, I see."

"Listen," and the cowboy grew very earnest. "When ther boss got home last night it was very late. He had with him a man and his daughter. Ther gal is very pretty an' innocent, too—I could see that. Well, Gluck calls me aside an' says he, 'Frank, I want you to sorter look after things around here, 'cause I am goin' ter send Bug Hinks an' his crowd off fur a day. I've got a young feller what's called Young Wild West comin' up here in ther mornin' ter buy a herd of cattle. I'm goin' ter sell him ther cattle an' git his money fur 'em. Then I'm goin' ter let Bug an' ther rest make out they're goin' ter drive ther herd down inter Wyomin', but ther first day out they will fix Young Wild West an' his two pards, an' come back with ther cattle an' all that Young Wild West an' his pards have in ther way of money an' sich like.' Says he, 'I've got an idee that I kin trust you, Frank.' An' I says, 'I reckon you kin, boss!' jest ter make out that I was as bad as he is. I knowed Steve Gluck was a crook when I hired with him, but I was in hard luck, an' I wanted ter earn a month's pay so I could git down in Colorado, where I belong, an' I took ther job. But you kin bet I ain't no crook, if I am among a crowd of 'em!"

Wild could tell that the young man was telling the plain, unvarnished truth.

"See here, Frank Totten," he said, smiling calmly at him, "I am glad you have told me all this. Not that I am afraid of this crowd of crooks, for I mean to cook them in great shape, but because I now know just what their game is. They are all down on me, from the boss to the vindictive cowboy called Jones. You can bet that we will cook this crowd of crooks, though! Just leave that to us!"

"You ain't goin' ter put up a fight ag'in 'em, are you?" asked the cowboy.

"That is just what we are going to do. We have already showed seven of them what we can do, and I guess we can easily manage to fix up the rest. When I say we will cook them I mean that we will render them in such a condition that they will be done! They will be well done, too; nothing rare about it. Did you ever see a crook cooked, Totten?"

"No, I don't know as I have," was the reply.

"Well, you just watch this gang, and see what we'll do to them."

"Well, from what I kin see of you fellers, I'll bet you kin do your share when it comes to a scrimmage."

"I guess we can. How about it, boys?" and Wild turned to his partners, who had not said a word as yet.

"A scrimmage with them cowboy crooks will jest be like eatin' pot-cheese an' pie to me!" Cheyenne Charlie declared.

"Well, if that dozen can out-shoot us when we get started they are welcome to do it," was all Jim had to say, while a confident smile played about his lips.

"There is somethin' what bothers me a good deal," said Frank Totten, looking uneasily toward the house, which they could just see around the corner of a long barn. "This man an' his darter has come here ter go ter work fur Gluck, you know. Gluck told me that he wouldn't have sent fur ther man ter come if he hadn't found out that he had a good-lookin' darter. That means somethin' very bad fur ther gal, an' she's altogether too good an' innocent ter be in ther house with such a gang as that. I jest made up my mind ter warn the man an' ther gal, ther same as I've warned you folks. Now, mebbe you kin help me ter keep ther gal from gittin' insulted or abused by Gluck, Young Wild West."

"You bet I can help you," was the reply. "I always make it my business to help those who are in distress. We saw Gluck meet the father and daughter last night, and I made up my mind then that the young woman was going to a very poor sort of a place to live. Just leave it to me, Totten! If this crowd of crooks are as villainous as you think they are we'll cook them!"

"Well, I'll help," was the grim retort from Totten.

Just then he happened to glance in the direction of the house.

"There's Steve Gluck now!" he exclaimed. "By thunder! He's talkin' to ther gal, too!"

Sure enough, our friends looked over and saw the ranchman walking at the side of Jennie Egbert, the girl who had arrived in Silver Shy the night before.

The villain was heading for a tree beneath which was a bench, and the girl was following him in a hesitating sort of way.

As yet neither of them had seen our friends.

As the couple got to the bench Gluck sat down on it, and motioned his fair companion to do likewise.

But she only drew back and declined.

"Sit down, gal!" he cried, loud enough for our friends to hear quite plainly.

"Please, I'd rather not," was the reply. "What did you want to say to me, Mr. Gluck? Say it while I am standing. I must get back and assist the housekeeper with the work."

"Hang the housekeeper and the work, too!" roared the ranchman. "Can't you see what I want, gal? I want ter talk a little love to yer. I ain't too old ter git married, an' you ain't too young."

At this the girl uttered a scream and started for the house.

Gluck sprang after her and seized her roughly by the shoulder.

"Go over and knock the brute down, Totten; we'll back you!" said Young Wild West.

Totten went off like a shot.

It was not more than a hundred yards to the spot.

Gluck saw him coming when he was less than half way there.

He also saw Young Wild West and his two partners.

"What's ther matter, Frank?" he called out, still retaining a hold on the girl's shoulder.

"Let that gal alone, Steve Gluck!" was the retort.

"What!" cried the villain.

"I mean what I say!"

"Oh, you do, hey?"

"Yes, I do."

"I see Young Wild West is over there. He put you up ter interfere, I s'pose?"

"Never mind about that. You ain't got no right ter ill-treat a female, an' I won't allow it, not while I see it goin' on."

At this juncture the girl broke away from the ranchman and ran to Totten for protection.

Steve Gluck pulled his revolver.

"Drop that!" shouted Young Wild West, who was now half way to the spot. "If there is going to be any shooting done I'll take a hand in it!"

Gluck hesitated a moment, and then put the shooter back in his belt.

"What does this mean, anyhow?" he demanded, putting on an injured air. "Can't a feller talk ter his guest without havin' all this interference?"

"I don't want to be his guest!" cried Jennie Egbert, getting close to Totten. "I don't want to stay here another hour. That man is a base scoundrel!"

"That's a fine way ter talk about ther man what's give your father a good job, an' who wants ter do ther right thing by you," said Gluck. "You're an ungrateful hussy, that's what you are!"

"I'm done workin' fur yer, Steve Gluck," exclaimed Frank Totten. "I ain't goin' ter work another day fur yer! I knowed yer was a putty bad customer when I hired with yer, but I didn't think you was as bad as all this."

"Jest be a little bit reasonable, Frank," advised the villain. "I mean ter do ther right thing by yer, an' you ought ter 'preciate it. Jest you remember that I give you a job when you wanted it mighty bad."

"I remember that all right. Bad when it comes ter doin what you've done, an' plannin' what you're goin' ter do, I'm out of it. You kin pay me fur ther three weeks I've been on ther ranch, or you kin keep it, jest as you see fit."

"Well, I only pay once a month. But jest wait! I reckon you'll change your mind directly. Hey, Bug! Ho, boys! Come out here!"

The next minute half a dozen cowboys came out of the house, among whom was Bug Hinks.

They had just awakened from a sleep, so they looked, and when they saw Young Wild West and his partners there they took it for granted that they had come over to buy the cattle.

But when their boss yelled out for them to draw their guns and cover Frank Totten they realized that something was wrong.

"Don't any of you pull a shooter," said Wild, quietly. "I give fair warning that the first man who does will go under!"

The cowboys knew him, and they did not so much as slide a hand toward a shooter.

"Mr. Gluck," said Wild, quietly, "I guess you had better come to terms. If this young lady don't want to stay here she needn't. And if your man wants to leave you had better pay him what is coming to him and let him go."

"Did you come down here ter buy cattle, or did yer come down jest ter interfere with my affairs?" demanded the ranchman.

"Well, I came down for the purpose of buying cattle, but I am not the sort to allow a man to act as you have been doing, I can tell you that!"

"Well, Young Wild West. I don't want ter have any trouble with yer. I'm ready ter show yer ther cattle, an' if you like 'em we'll strike a bargain right away."

"All right. Young lady, where is your father?" and Wild turned to the girl.

"He went out with some of the men an hour ago to look around the property," was the reply.

"Well, when he comes back you and he can go with us. This is no place for either of you. This ranch seems to be run by a crowd of crooks. They are very raw, too, and need cooking."

Just what the owner of the ranch was thinking about would be hard to tell.

But it is safe to say that he would have given all he was worth if he could strangle the daring young deadshot.

But he had been cowed by Wild, and that made him very cautious about what he did, or even said.

It must have been that he wanted to get hold of the money Wild was willing to pay for the cattle very bad, or he would have ordered him to leave the premises.

With tears in her eyes Jennie Egbert waited to see what was going to happen next.

While they were all standing there her father rode up in the company of Dave Jones, the man who had tried to shoot Wild over in Silver Shy.

"Father, we are going away from here!" cried the girl, running over to meet him.

"What is the matter, Jennie?" cried Egbert, in surprise.

She said something in a whisper to him, and then with a flash of anger in his eyes, Egbert turned to Gluck and said:

"So that is the kind of a man you have turned out to be, Steve? Well. I'm done with you! I'll starve to death before I'll stay another hour with you!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE COWBOY SCRIMMAGE IS ON.

"There's a big mistake here," said Steve Gluck, trying his best to make it appear that he meant all right. "Ther gal has misunderstood me."

"There wasn't no misunderstandin' about it, boss!" spoke up Frank Totten. "I seen it all with my own eyes, an' what's more you told me as how you was goin' ter make ther gal your wife."

"Yes, I said so. But I meant if she'd have me. Now, Billy," and he turned to Egbert, "you don't blame me fur tryin' ter make love to your darter, do yer? I'm worth a good deal of money, an' I'd be just ther one fur her."

"No, no!" cried the girl, as though she was afraid her father would side in with the villain.

"Don't be afraid, Jennie," he hastened to assure her. "If you ever get married you shall pick out the man yourself. As for you, Steve Gluck," and he flashed a glance of anger at the ranchman, "I don't want you to ever speak to my daughter again! Now, instead of you being put to the trouble to send back the two horses you borrowed last night, Jennie and I will ride them back and deliver them to the owner."

"No, yer won't! I'll have ter pay fur them nags if they don't reach ther Alhambra. You can't work nothin' like that on me."

"Well, I will see that they deliver the horses all right, Mr. Gluck," spoke up our hero, just as though not the least trouble had passed between them, and he was simply waiting to do business with the ranchman.

"Dan, go an' git them two horses," Gluck said, looking at the sneaking cowboy.

He gave a peculiar motion with his hand as he said the words, and Dan nodded.

He headed straight for the tumble-down shack that was called the ranch stables, and was soon out of sight inside it.

Wild and his partners noticed the glance that had passed between them, and also the motion the ranchman made with his hand.

He was not going after the horses at all, so our hero decided.

A wait of ten minutes followed, and then Egbert began to grow uneasy.

"I'll go an' git them horses," he said at length.

"Go ahead, you ungrateful galoot!" snapped Gluck.

The man walked over to the stabe.

Just as he went inside a sharp cry sounded.

"Somethin' is wrong over there!" cried Cheyenne Charie. "I reckon I'd better go an' see about it, Wild."

"Do so, Charlie," replied the dashing young deadshot. "If there's anything crooked over there shoot to kill!"

There was a sneering expression on the face of Gluck at this.

"So you think we are all crooks over here, Young Wild West?" he remarked.

"It looks that way to me," replied Wild, coolly.

Just then a shot sounded from the shack where Charlie had started for.

The scout stood in plain sight of Wild and Jim, and they saw that he had a smoking revolver in his hand.

"He's shot one of our men, boys!" yelled Gluck. "I reckon ther limit is reached. A man's got a right ter take care of his own property! Give it to 'em, boys! We can't die but once."

The cowboys gathered about drew their revolvers.

But they did not begin shooting the instant they did so.

That was where they made a mistake.

They might have succeeded in dropping both Wild and Jim if they had done that.

But the fear they had for the dashing young deadshot kept them from doing so.

Our hero saw that it was a case of shoot now.

Crack!

He fired, and the most dangerous looking of the cowboys dropped.

Crack!

Another red and another went the same way.

"Get behind the tree!" Wild called out to the girl.

Miss Egbert Frank Totten was already leading her there.

Totten was alive to the situation, and he began firing recklessly at the cowboys.

They were all on the run now, and the ranchman was with them.

They had seen two of their number fall, and that was enough to quell them for the time being.

"Whoopee!" yelled Cheyenne Charlie, as he came running toward his friends.

Just then Dan Jones, the man who had gone to get the horses for Egbert and his daughter, appeared at the head of half a dozen mounted men.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

They fired right and left.

Cheyenne Charlie stumbled and fell just then, and it was quite natural that Wild and the rest should think that he had been shot.

Young Wild West now brought his rifle into use.

The cowboys scattered, and made for shelter as they saw his movement.

Wild hesitated about firing at them.

They were running away, and he did not want to shoot a man in the back.

He was not built that way.

Just then Charlie got up and came running toward them, firing his revolver at the retreating cowboys as he came.

But they were now too far off for him to do much damage to them, and he only served to make them ride faster.

"Hurrah!" cried Jim, waving his hat. "Charlie is all right!"

"Did you think I was shot, boys?" called out the scout, as he ran up to the tree.

"Yes, we did, Charlie," answered Jim.

"Well, I wasn't touched by no bullet. I hit my toe agin a root that was stickin' up, an' it throwed me quickern' a wink."

"What was the trouble over in the stable shed?" Wild queried.

"Oh, ther measly coyotes has got ther gal's daddy a prisoner over there. I jest got a glimpse at him when one of 'em raised a gun ter drop me. I was jest in time! I dropped him as clean as a whistle, makin' ther first crook ter be cooked!"

"Well, Jim and I have cooked two more. So that makes three of them."

"They are cooked a little too much, I think," observed Dart. "I had an idea that they could be cooked just enough to make them so they would be digestible to the community at large."

"So do I, boys," said Wild. "Well, maybe we won't have to kill any more of them. But one thing is certain! We must get that man away from them."

"Oh, please do!" cried Jennie.

"Just you wait! We will first try and find out what they are up to."

Steve Gluck had reached the house, and so had Bug Hinks and the rest of the cowboys.

The gang with Dan Jones at their head had managed to get around to the other side of a shed.

Wild figured it out that there would be just sixteen men to fight if the crooked crowd decided to make a rush at them.

Over near the big corral was a gully with a row of trees and bushes growing on either side of it in thick profusion.

He decided to make for that and use it as a protection in case the scoundrels did try to wipe them out.

If it had not been that Egbert was a prisoner in the stable shack he would have gone on back to Silver Shy and left the crooked crowd on the ranch.

"Boys," he said, "we have had three or four mix-ups with the cowboys of Gluck's ranch, but now we are going to have a real scrimmage, I guess. Gluck evidently thinks that because he is on his own property he has the law on his side, and if he can drop us he will no doubt be exonerated from blame. But we don't intend to be dropped. We will stay here and fight until he gives up the young lady's father alive and unharmed. That's the way we will do it. Gluck's goose has got to be cooked!"

Frank Totten was the man she had first looked to for protection, so Jennie Egbert clung to him.

"Keep up a stiff upper lip, miss," he said to her. "We will manage to git horses, an' git your pop, too. Then we'll strike out fur Silver Shy. I'll try my luck at minin', an' I reckon you won't starve, 'cause I'll take care of you an' your pop, too, till he gits something' ter do."

"Oh, thank you!" exclaimed the girl, the tears starting to her eyes. "You are a very kind gentleman."

"No, I ain't no gentleman. I never had eddication enough ter get a gentleman, but I'm honest, an' I like ter work fur honest people."

Totten said this with much fervor.

"That man is all right," Jim Dart whispered to our hero. "I like his spirit, anyhow."

"Oh, I sized him up to be all right at the very first I saw of him," was the reply. "He will put up a good fight, too, with some one to lead him on."

The gully, with its trees for shelter, was soon reached.

It was probably a quarter of a mile from the house.

Wild told Totten to find a suitable place for the girl below the level of the surrounding country, so she would be out of the way of the bullets in case they came that way.

There were plenty of such places in the gully, and she was soon installed in one of them with the trunk of a fallen tree to sit upon.

"Now, then," observed Young Wild West, who had been doing considerable thinking for the past minute or two, "I am going over to that stable and try to get Egbert from the cowboys."

"Goin' alone, Wild?" asked Cheyenne Charlie.

"Yes," was the retort. "I guess one will be enough. "I may not succeed, but I will impress it on the minds of the villains that we mean business, and that may make them let him go before long."

He examined his rifle and revolvers, and finding them all right, started for the stable, the rifle lying in the hollow of his left arm.

It was rather a daring thing to do, but the boy had found that nerve and coolness had much effect upon the crooks, and that was why he was doing it.

Charlie and Jim took positions where they could shoot at long range the moment any one interfered with the dashing young Prince of the Saddle.

Wild knew that he must be surely seen by the villains, so he was taking the risk of being shot at.

Not until he was half way to the shack did anything happen.

Then the report of a rifle rang out, and a bullet whizzed over his head.

His quick eyes showed him where the shot came from.

It was the window of the house.

Instantly the muzzle of his rifle flew around, and with a quick aim he pulled the trigger of the weapon.

Crack!

As the report rang out he had the satisfaction of seeing the form of a man drop back from the window, while a cry of pain came to his ears.

"I guess I plugged you somewhere, old fellow," he muttered. "I must say that this is the most peculiar gang of crooks I ever came in contact with. They don't want to make an open fight of it, so it seems."

No more shots were fired, and he kept right on, just as though there was not the least danger.

When he was within a hundred yards of the shack a wild yell rent the air, and then out into view rode six cowboys.

They began firing with the revolvers in a reckless sort of way.

Our hero simply smiled, and dropped flat upon the ground.

He was as cool as though it was a mere farce that was in progress.

The cowboys spread out and came straight for him.

Crack!

Wild fired and unhorsed one in a twinkling.

The others came right on.

Crack!

Again his rifle spoke, and another villain threw up his hands and slipped from the saddle.

"Whoopee! Whoopee!"

Cheyenne Charlie's familiar war-cry rang out, and he came dashing on horseback to the aid of Wild.

This seemed to be the signal for a general attack from the crooks.

The ranchman and his men had worked their way to the stable from the rear of the house and got their horses.

Now no less than ten villainous men were headed for Young Wild West.

The cowboy scrimmage was surely on!

Crack—crack—crack!

Lucky for our friends, none of them had rifles, and they were using their heavy Colt's revolvers.

But these weapons were not accurate at such a distance.

Charlie and Jim fired at long range and both got good results.

The cowboys were getting "cooked" in earnest now.

But they came right on, and rapidly neared Wild.

Shots were fired in quick succession.

Suddenly Charlie and Jim, who were yet two hundred yards away, saw Wild roll over and lie perfectly still.

It certainly looked as though he had been hit.

CHAPTER VII.

WILD IS SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD.

Young Wild West had really been hit by a bullet from one of the cowboys.

But it was not due to the marksmanship of the villain.

The bullet had hit a flat stone on the ground near our hero, and glancing off, struck the side of his head, just grazing it enough to draw the blood and render him temporarily unconscious.

Yells of delight came from the crooks as they saw the boy roll over.

They thought he had been killed.

And this nerved them to do desperate things.

"I must have the money the young feller brought with him," said Steve Gluck. "Five hundred dollars to ther man what gits it fur me!"

Two of those nearest to where Wild lay heard this.

They wanted the money bad.

Lying close to their horses' necks, they galloped to the spot, while those behind them kept firing at Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart.

One of them had his horse shot from under him and gave it up, but the other, who was no other than Dan Jones, went on.

A bullet cut a lock of his hair from his head, but he kept straight for the prostrate boy.

He reached the spot and dismounted.

Jones was the most reckless and daring villain of the lot.

He knew he could not get back to his friends again without being hit, if he attempted to ride.

A sudden idea came into his head.

He would get the body of the boy on his back, and then go on foot from the spot as fast as he could.

The villain, though not able to cope with a skilled fighter, was very powerful.

He could lift a burden and carry it with ease, especially if it was no heavier than an ordinary man.

Without wasting a second, he grabbed what he supposed to be the dead body of Young Wild West by the arms, and with a mighty effort pulled him upon his back, stretching the arms about his neck.

Then Dan Jones started on a jog trot from the spot.

"Now, yer kin shoot, yer crazy galoots!" he yelled. "But you'll have ter send ther bullets through ther body of your friend afore yer kin drop me."

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were not more than fifty yards from the spot at the time, and the audacity of the villain caused them to come to a temporary halt.

And that temporary halt was a bad thing for them.

It gave the rest of the cowboys a chance to get right in line with Jones and his burden.

They realized that it would do them no good to shoot now.

If they must get Wild from the crooks, whether he was alive or dead, it must be done by some other way than force.

Meanwhile Jones staggered along under his burden and reached the foremost of his friends.

"Go through his clothes an' let him drop!" shouted Steve Gluck.

"It will be better ter take him right to ther barn an' do it there," answered Jones.

"That's right, Steve. It will take too long ter do it here. We might get dropped afore we kin do it!" cried Bug Hinks.

"Come on, then!" yelled the ranchman. "Hand ther carcass up here on my horse."

This was done by two of the men.

Jones got on a horse with another rider, and then they galloped swiftly toward the nearest shelter, which was a long, low barn, leaving Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart still at a halt, undecided just what to do.

The barn was reached, and then without loss of time, the ranchman proceeded to rifle the pockets of our hero.

Wild was still unconscious, and he was as limp as a wet rag.

After some little search Gluck found all the money the boy had on his person.

But he was disappointed, for it was scarcely more than a hundred dollars.

Young Wild West never carried a very large sum in his pockets.

The money he had brought with him to buy the cattle was concealed in the saddle-bags upon the back of the sorrel stallion.

He found that a safe way to carry money, especially as he had a set of secret pockets for that purpose in the bags.

"I'd like ter know how ther blamed young galoot expected ter cash in fur ther cattle," remarked the ranchman in a tone of disgust. "Them other two fellers must have ther money. Let's git out after 'em, boys! It will be easier now, since Young Wild West is dead! I've got ter git that gal back, too! Come on!"

Out of the barn they went, and just as the last one disappeared our hero came to.

The first thing he did was to place his hand to the side of his head.

The wound was bleeding profusely.

"I guess I got touched pretty hard that time," he muttered. "But I am not dead yet! I'm good as a thousand dead men, and the cowboy crooks will find it out, too!"

Then he arose to a sitting posture and looked around him.

Wild was surprised to find himself in the barn.

But he was not going to let anything like that interfere with him.

He felt for his handkerchief to bind up his head, and found his pockets turned inside out.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, under his breath, "the scoundrels must have brought me here and robbed me. They think I am dead, no doubt. Well, just wait!"

He found the handkerchief, and tied it about his head to stop the blood that was trickling down his face and neck.

Then he got upon his feet.

A little weak, but as full of grit as ever, Young Wild West took a look around him.

His belt with his revolvers and knife in it lay on the floor, but his rifle was not to be seen.

There was nothing strange about this, since Dan Jones had not bothered about the rifle when he grabbed the unconscious boy and got him on his back in such a hurry.

The rifle lay where it had dropped from Wild's hands when he rolled over.

Wild went to the door of the barn and looked out.

He saw the cowboys riding in a circle, but from where he was could not see Charlie and Jim.

Buckling his belt on, he drew one of his shooters and stepped out.

The shed or stable was not far distant, and as he knew that Egbert was there he determined to release him.

It was easy enough for him to get over to the stable without being seen by the cowboys.

They were too much engaged in their maneuvers to look that way.

Wild reached the stable in a hurry.

There was no enclosed front to it, so it was easy for him to look inside.

Straw, hay, and refuse was littered about, and he had to look pretty sharp before he saw the figure of a man lying in a corner.

The daring young deadshot ran over to him.

"Hello!" he said, in a low tone of voice.

"Eh! What!" was the startled reply.

It was Egbert, bound hand and foot.

He gave a frightened look as our hero bent over him.

"You ain't goin' ter kill me, are you?" he gasped.

"No, I am going to set you free," was the reply. "There you are!"

Two quick strokes of his knife and Egbert was free.

The man looked at his rescuer questioningly.

"You are a friend, are you not?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Tell me what to do. There is a fight going on. I can tell by the shooting."

"Yes, I was in the scrimmage myself. I got hit, and Steve Gluck and his men brought me here, thinking I was dead, I guess. They went through my pockets, and took what money I had."

"Oh, I know who you are now. You are Young Wild West! You were out there where my daughter was. Where is she now?"

"She is safe from the scoundrels, I think. Now, if we can get horses and manage to get around unobserved, we will get where she is. Come on!"

While it was a stable they were in, there was not a single horse there.

"Do you know where there are any horses?" Wild asked.

The man shook his head.

"The cowboys have got them all in use, I guess," he answered.

"Where are the horses that you and your daughter rode over with last night?"

"Oh, I think they put them in the corral over there."

"How far is it?"

"A quarter of a mile about, I should think."

Wild cast a swift glance around the stable.

There were three or four saddles and bridles hanging to pegs, and some old harness for draught horses.

Wild pulled down two of the bridles.

"Come on!" he said. "We will go to the corral."

Egbert followed him out of the shed as willingly as though he was satisfied that he was going to be surely saved from the villainous band.

Wild peered around a corner of the shack and saw the cowboys gathered in a bunch not far from the place where they had taken refuge when they left the place where the argument had occurred.

There was nothing to be seen of his partners.

"I guess we don't stand much show of getting there," he remarked. "If I only had my rifle I would soon scatter that gang."

"Would you undertake to fight that crowd?" asked Egbert.

"Yes; there is simply a lull in the scrimmage. I would like to start it up again. My partners would take the other end of it, and then I guess we would finish cooking the crowd of crooks."

"Well, they ought to be cooked, as you call it. That means killed, I s'pose?"

"Not necessarily. When a man gives up and begs for mercy he is pretty well cooked, I should say."

"Well, if you really think you could fix them if you had a rifle, I know where there is one."

"Where?" asked our hero, eagerly.

"In ther house over there. Steve Gluck has got a brand new Winchester, an' it's a wonder to me why he didn't bring it out."

"Well, I suppose he was afraid he might shoot your daughter. He wants to take her alive, you know, and marry her."

"Yes, the villain! I never had any such idea as that, or I never would have accepted his offer. I knew him several years ago, and he was an honest man then. But how he has changed!"

"Never mind! He shan't harm you or your daughter. We can get to the house quite easily. Come on! We'll get that rifle, and then I'll show you how I will empty some of the saddles out there."

"All right."

Egbert clinched his teeth with a do-or-die spirit, and started for the house.

Wild followed him, keeping a watch on the cowboys and their rascally employer meanwhile.

He saw that they were halted, evidently for the purpose of holding a consultation as to the best course to pursue.

They were probably afraid to dash down to the gully and run the risk of dropping under the galling fire they would get.

When about half way to the house they heard a shot fired.

One of the villainous cowboys threw up his arms and fell from the back of his horse.

"Whoopee!"

Wild caught the sound, and he knew it was Cheyenne Charlie who had uttered the yell.

He waved his hand, and then hastened for the house at a faster gait.

He knew now that his companions in the gully were aware that he was alive

"We'll cook them all right, Egbert," he said, smiling at the scared face of the man with him.

"I hope so," was the fervent reply.

Egbert was not much of a fighter, that was plain.

But he could not help admiring the coolness of the daring young fellow who had his head tied up with a blood-stained handkerchief.

The two were now running swiftly for the house.

They had all but reached it when a yell from the cowboys told them that they had been seen.

The villains had already wheeled their horses, on account of the fatal shot that had been fired from the cover of the trees, and spreading out, they now came dashing for the house as fast as their bronchos could carry them.

Egbert uttered a cry of dismay.

"We're gone now!" he exclaimed.

"No," answered Wild, his dark eyes flashing fire. "There are not enough of them to ever reach this house if that rifle you spoke of is loaded!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCRIMMAGE CONTINUES.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were sorely perplexed.

Though they had seen one of the cowboys pick up the limp body of Wild and make off, they could not make themselves believe that the young deadshot was dead.

That seemed impossible!

Young Wild West to die in that fashion! Why, it really seemed absurd to his two partners.

They did not attempt to give pursuit because they thought that if Wild was not really dead the villains might take their revenge upon him if things got too hot for them.

So they allowed the villains to take the boy to the barn, they going back to the gully to talk it over.

There is an old saying that "two heads are better than one," but just then Charlie and Jim thought that three would be better still.

Frank Totten had been on the ranch three weeks, and he ought to know something about how things were kept and arranged there.

He might be able to give them some good advice.

"Do you think ther young feller is dead?" Totten asked, as they came in where he was waiting with Jennie Egbert.

"No, I can't believe that he is dead!" exclaimed Jim Dart, speaking almost fiercely.

"He only got stunned, I reckon," added Cheyenne Charlie, in a matter-of-fact way, and trying to appear calm.

"Well, I don't think he's dead," said Totten. "If he was what would Dan Jones want ter take him away fur?"

The scout nodded.

"Ther sneakin' galoot must have knowed he wasn't dead, and he rode out to take him a prisoner, 'cause he thought it a good chance while Wild didn't know nothin'."

While they were talking it over the cowboys suddenly appeared riding toward the gully at full speed.

"Here they come!" cried Jim. "But they will never get here in the gully. They haven't got enough sand in them for that. Let's pick off a couple, Charlie."

"Wait till they git a little nearer, an' then we won't be apt to make a mistake," was the reply, while the scout smiled grimly.

They did wait.

When they fired two of the crooks went down.

That brought them to a halt immediately.

"You needn't be afraid of them fellers gittin' yer, miss," said Totten, turning to his fair charge. "They ain't got a rifle, and they won't come near enough ter do any harm with their six-shooters. I jest wish I had a rifle! I'd like ter help these brave fellers out in this scrimmage!"

The cowboy was standing near a tree on the opposite side of the gully, while the girl sat on a log below him.

Totten happened to look off to the trail that led to the ranch from Silver Shy, and as he did so he gave a start.

"Here comes a feller ridin' a mule!" he exclaimed.

Charlie and Jim could not see from where they were, but they quite naturally concluded that it was October Gale, the shoemaker.

He was the only man they had seen riding a mule since they had come to Silver Shy.

"Well, I reckon you'd better try to steer him here, or else make him go back," the scout answered. "If he goes over where them galoots kin git hold of him he'll git killed an' robbed, most likely."

Totten thought the same way.

He decided to warn the approaching man of his danger.

Leaving the cover of the strip of trees, he walked out and waved his hat.

He was seen almost instantly by the man on the mule.

The cowboys beckoned for him to turn from the trail and come where he was, placing his hand over his mouth as a warning not to say anything at the same time.

Just then the cowboy crooks fired a volley with their revolvers, and hearing it, the rider, who really was the shoemaker, made for the gully as fast as he could make the mule go.

He came up without being seen by the villains on the other side, and dismounting, exclaimed:

"Well, I swan! What's ther matter?"

"There's a scrimmage goin' on," answered Totten. "There's no use in you gittin' shot, so I called yer over here."

"Ther gang what had some fun with you last night is tryin' to git ther young lady," spoke up Charlie. "They've got Young Wild West an' ther gal's father now, an' we don't know whether Wild is alive or dead."

"I'm awful sorry I come over this way now," said October Gale, truthfully. "I thought I'd foller ther first trail out an' look fur some work ter do in the line of mendin' boots an' harness. I didn't think I was goin' ter fetch up among that gang what was so vicious last night, indeed I didn't."

"Well, that's jest what you've gone an' done," said the scout. "Hello! Great gimlets! There's Wild alive an' as sound as a dollar!"

As the words left the scout's lips all hands, even to the girl, rushed to look.

They could see Wild and Egbert hurrying for the house.

Cheyenne Charlie wanted our hero to know that he was seen by them, so he fired a shot at the cowboy crooks and let out his war-cry.

When the daring young deadshot waved his hand in answer Charlie was so elated that he scarcely could contain himself.

"They're makin' fur ther house!" he exclaimed. "An' if they git there you kin bet them galoots will have a hot time afore they git 'em out! We'll jest ride over an' give it to 'em from ther rear, won't we, Jim?"

"You bet!" exclaimed Dart, who was overjoyed at finding out that Wild was not dead.

The ranchman and his gang now turned and rode for the house at the top of their speed.

"Come on, Jim!" cried the scout. "We've got to take a hand in this."

Mounting their horses, the two rode out from the cover of the trees.

The cowboys were heading straight for the house, yelling and waving their hats as they went.

"Don't begin to shoot till they start in," said the scout.

"All right," answered Jim.

Away they went, those left behind watching them eagerly.

To Jennie Egbert it meant the saving of her father, and her heart was beating wildly as she watched Charlie and Jim riding after the villains.

"My!" exclaimed October Gale, as he watched the race; "I've been around in ther West fur nigh onto two months now, but I never did see such goin's-on as I have since I landed in Silver Shy. I'm beginnin' ter think that this here ain't no place fur me."

"Where are you from?" asked Frank Totten.

"I'm all ther way from ther state of Illinoy. I was born on a farm an' learned ther shoemaker' trade from an uncle of mine. Ther Gale family is a big one, an' it's spread out putty well in ther eastern part of Illinoy. I was born on ther first of October, an' fur want of a better name my father called me October. An' October Gale is all right, but there ain't much blowin' about me. I'm jest a plain, easy-goin' man, tryin' ter make a livin'. Ain't your soles putty well wore, young man? I'd like ther job of puttin' new ones on your boots fur yer."

"I'll give you a job when we get out of this scrape," replied Frank Totten, smiling in spite of the situation. "Jest now we've got ter be on ther lookout ter save our lives."

"Why, I reckon them fellers won't come back here now," and October Gale looked at the cowboy in astonishment.

"They might. S'pose they happen ter git ther best of Cheyenne Charlie an' Jim Dart? Young Wild West an' Egbert is in that house over there, an' how will they ever git away from it with that gang of crooks waitin' outside ter shoot 'em down?"

"Young Wild West will work his way out all right. Jest see if he don't!"

"Oh, I hope he does, and that he gets my father away with him!" said Jennie Egbert, fervently.

The sounds of shooting could now be heard, and all turned their gaze toward the house.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were firing from the saddle, and shots were coming from the house.

The cowboys made a desperate effort to rally, but suddenly they turned and rode for the outbuildings.

They left four riderless horses galloping about on the field, too.

As luck would have it, the steeds started toward the gully.

"Them's just what we want!" exclaimed Totten, looking at the handsome sorrel of Young Wild West, which was calmly cropping the vegetation at the edge of the gully. "I wonder if there'd be any objections made if I was ter take that feller an' try an' catch them bronchos?"

"'Tain't likely Young Wild West would object ter it," advised the shoemaker.

"I'm goin' ter do it, anyhow."

The horses were coming directly toward them, and the cowboys had now reached the barn, and were not in sight.

The cowboy thought it would be safe to try it, anyhow.

Walking up to the sorrel, he lifted the bridle rein over its head, and mounted.

Then he rode out on the level stretch that lay between the gully and the ranch buildings.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart had halted right under the tree where Steve Gluck had insulted the girl.

Totten rode slowly to meet the four horses.

They had slackened their speed, but were still heading that way.

The cowboy brought the sorrel to a halt.

He had an idea that the bronchos would come up and stop near him.

In this he was right, for they stopped running when within a few yards of him, and then walked slowly up.

"We'll need jest three of 'em, providin' everything goes right," he muttered. "Then I'll take two of 'em over where Charlie an' Dart is, an' Young Wild West an' Egbert will have something ter ride away on."

"Whoa!" he said to the horses, and they obeyed.

Then he proceeded to catch them, and as they were well broken steeds, he had little trouble.

He led the whole four of them back to the gully, and he took notice that what he was doing was appreciated by Wild's two partners.

"Here ye are, Miss Egbert!" he cried, as he paused within sight of the girl. "I reckon we've got something ter git away with now."

"I am so glad!" was the reply. "Now, if the rest were only here."

"They'll be here putty soon, see if they don't. I reckon we're putty near through with this business."

"What are yer goin' ter do now?" asked October Gale.

"I'm going ter take a couple of horses over there ter let Young Wild West an' ther gal's father have a chance ter ride away," was the reply. "I hope you'll stay right here an' keep ther company of Miss Egbert till I git back."

"I'll do that, an' I'll put up ther blamest fight I ever done in my life if any one comes ter bother us."

"Well, if any one should come you'd better mount an' light out fur Silver Shy as quick as yer kin; that'll be the best way."

"I think so, too," ventured Jennie.

"All right. It'll be jest as ther gal says."

Totten now rode off, leading two of the horses with him.

He took a semi-circle, so as to make sure of not coming in contact with the cowboys.

Things were at a standstill just now.

The cowboys had not showed themselves yet, and Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were still under the tree not far from the house.

Why they did not go right up to the house Frank Totten did not know.

But he could not see all that was transpiring from where he was.

He rode on around and soon reached the two.

"What's ther matter?" he asked.

"Ther measly coyotes is tryin' ter fool us, I reckon," answered the scout. "They are behind that barn an' shed over there, an' as they are nearer to ther house than we are, they might pounce out on us all of a sudden afore we could

git there. We're jest waitin' a few minutes ter see what they're up to."

There was one thing about it, and that was that the house could not be approached without those inside seeing it.

What Wild was up to his partners did not know.

It seemed to them that there was a chance for him to leave the house and get to them before the cowboys could get near enough to do damage with their revolvers.

"You've got horses, I see," nodded the scout, approvingly, as he looked at the steeds the cowboys had brought over. "Now, if Wild an' Egbert would only come out of ther house I think we'd be all right. We ain't cooked ther crooks yet, it seems, an' there's got to more of 'em go under, I s'pose."

Just then there came the sounds of rapid firing in the house.

"What's happened now?" cried Jim Dart.

"Great gimlets!" said Charlie. "Ther galoots has got in ther house some way. Come on! We've got ter take a hand in ther scrimmage if we go under for it!"

The scout let out a yell and started on a mad gallop straight for the ranch house.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COWBOY CROOKS TURN THE TABLES.

When the cowboy crooks made for the barn it was because they really had had enough of it.

Even Steve Gluck was ready to give in.

Half a dozen of his men were either dead or so badly wounded that there was little chance for them to live.

They were all surprised when they found that Young Wild West was alive.

When they reached the shelter of the barn the ranchman began to think harder than he had ever done in his life before.

"There's Young Wild West an' Billy Egbert in ther house," he said, "an' there's them two pards of Young Wild West out there. Egbert kin be counted as nothin', but ther other three is equal ter about forty, I reckon. Now, ther thing is, what is we goin' ter do?"

Dan Jones scratched his head thoughtfully during the short spell of silence that followed the villain's words.

Suddenly he brightened up.

"I reckon we could sneak around an' git in ther house by ther back way an' take Young Wild West by surprise," he said.

The ranchman looked interested.

"You know ther cellar where ther milk is kept?" went on Jones.

"Sartin."

"Well, we could sneak up ter that in about three minutes, without bein' seen from ther house, I reckon."

"I reckon we could. But what then?"

"Ther kitchen door is only about twenty feet from ther hole in the ground where ther milk-cans is."

"Yes, but how kin we git that distance without bein' shot?"

"Where's Nancy, ther house-keeper?"

"Somewhere in ther house, I reckon. 'Tain't likely they've hurt her. She's old an' wouldn't do nothin' ter make 'em hurt her, anyhow."

Dan Jones did some more studying.

"I'm goin' ter sneak over ter that milk cellar!" he exclaimed suddenly. "If I don't come back inside of five minutes, an' you don't hear anything wrong, ther rest of yer come. You kin all sneak along through ther sweet corn patch an' git to ther cellar without half tryin'. I'm goin' ter git ther best of Young Wild West!"

The ranchman nodded his approval, and without any loss of time, Jones dropped to the ground and began to crawl for the patch of corn near by.

As he had said, it was easy for him to get there.

But to get to the house from the milk cellar would be another thing.

Any one attempting that would not only run every risk in the world of being seen by those inside the house, but those outside, as well.

Dan Jones had a project in view that he had not enlightened his companions on, though.

The villainous man was not only a sneak, but quite a schemer as well.

Once in the corn patch he made rapid headway for the cellar, which was nothing more than a hole dug in the ground with an opening on each side, so the air could circulate and keep the milk and butter cool.

The opening furthest from the house was right at the edge of the patch of corn.

Jones got there almost in a minute after entering the cover of the growing corn.

He listened a moment, and hearing nothing that would indicate that the cellar was occupied by any one just then boldly crept through the opening.

It was large enough for half a dozen to stand upright at one time.

The villain had barely gained an entrance when he saw the opening at the other end suddenly darken.

Then an old woman descended the stone steps.

It was Nancy, the housekeeper.

"Sh! Nancy!" exclaimed Jones in a whisper.

The old woman gave a muffled cry and looked at him in alarm.

"Those people in ther house want ter kill us all, Nancy," he went on.

"I am afraid so," she answered, tremblingly.

"We mustn't let 'em."

"How are you goin' to stop 'em, Dan?"

"I'll find a way. But what did they say to you?"

"The boy told me to go on with my work, just the same as though nothin' had happened. He said they wasn't goin' ter hurt me, but they was goin' to cook ther cowboy crooks an' make Mister Gluck wish he'd never been born."

"Oh, they are, hey? Where are they?"

"In ther middle room, where they kin see about everything that's going on. They kin look right out here, an' most likely they watch me come here."

"Well, I'll tell you what you do, Nancy. You go back an' git an extra dress of yourn, an' then come back here. Hurry up, now! Don't let 'em think that there's any one here."

"All right, Dan."

The old woman hastened back, hobbling along painfully.

While she was gone Steve Gluck arrived in the cellar.

Then came Bug Hinks and two more of the men.

Dan Jones smiled and rubbed his hands.

"I reckon it's all right, boss," he said. "Nancy is ther one what'll help us out in this case."

"Nancy?" queried Gluck.

"Yes. Here she comes now."

Back came the old woman.

She was not much surprised to see the rest of the men in the little milk cellar.

"Here's the dress, Dan," she said, as she slipped it from over the one she was wearing. "It's jest the same pattern as this one, 'cause Mister Gluck bought a whole piece of calico. I've got two more of the same kind."

"Good enough! Now watch me!"

Jones very quickly put the dress on.

A light very quickly dawned upon the ranchman just then.

"I see!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper. "Dan, you are a great one, you are! I shan't furgit yer fur this."

"Jest wait, boss."

Next he took the little shawl the old woman had pinned over her head and put it over his own.

"I reckon I'll fix them two fellers in there in short order," he exclaimed. "If yer should happen ter hear a shot fired jest rush in."

"Go ahead, Dan! I feel that your plan is goin' ter work," answered Gluck.

Jones went out of the cellar with a pretty good imitation of the old woman.

He walked boldly into the kitchen.

Being acquainted with the house, he knew just where to find Young Wild West and Egbert.

The door of the middle room was open, and Egbert was looking when he entered the kitchen.

But the man paid little or no attention to him.

Jones began to feel very uneasy now.

He intended to manage to close the door of the middle room, so his companions could get inside.

He fumbled about the kitchen for a minute or two, and then went out again.

Straight to the cellar he went.

"Boss," said he in a whisper, "I reckon a couple of yer had better sneak in when I shut ther door in there. You have got ter be quick about it. If yer keep putty low ter ther ground it ain't likely them two what's over there by ther tree will see yer."

"All right," answered Gluck. "Me an' Bug will come in, an' we'll do it in no time!"

Jones hobbled back.

He picked up a broom and began to sweep the floor of the kitchen.

Presently he closed the door and swept hard on the floor.

Out came the ranchman and Bug Hinks from the cellar

They crept to the kitchen door in very quick time.

And the move they made was not observed by Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, as it happened.

Once in the kitchen the two villains drew their revolvers.

"Go on an' open ther door!" whispered Gluck, who was anxious to get it over with.

Broom in hand, the disguised Jones stepped over and opened the door.

"What was the matter, old lady?" asked Egbert. "We wasn't afraid of a little dust.

Jones mumbled something and then Gluck and Bug crept softly to the doorway.

Young Wild West was standing at the window, rifle in hand.

He had found the new rifle loaded, and it is needless to say that he did great work with it during the short time he had the opportunity.

Wild turned and saw the disguised man with the broom, but the back of Jones was toward him, and he never for a moment suspected that anything was wrong.

He was looking at Charlie and Jim, who stood talking beside their horses, and watching the place where the cowboy crooks had last been seen.

Presently the supposed woman came in and began sweeping up the dirt right near his feet.

Wild stepped aside to give more room.

At that instant Jones wound his arms about the boy's body, pinioning his arms and causing him to drop his rifle.

Before Wild could utter a cry or make a move to free himself, Steve Gluck and Bug Hinks sprang in with leveled revolvers.

"One word an' you're a goner, Young Wild West!" exclaimed Bug Hinks, while Gluck covered Egbert.

Taken completely by surprise, Wild could but give in.

Egbert uttered a cry of fear and threw up his hands.

Lariats belonging to the ranch were hanging to pegs on the wall.

It was but the word of a minute for Bug to grab one.

The loop was placed over our hero's head, and then they wound him into a state of helplessness in no time.

Then Egbert was treated in a like manner, he falling an easy victim.

"Now, then, Young Wild West, I reckon I'm on top fur a while," said the ranchman with a grin. "I was ther under dog a little while ago, but my turn has come now. Dan, jest call ther rest of ther boys in. It don't make no difference whether them two fellers out there sees 'em or not now."

Jones uttered a laugh and threw off his disguise.

Then he hastened to the kitchen door and called the cowboys.

They had all managed to work their way through the patch of corn by this time, and they came in with a rush.

"Hooray!" yelled Bug Hinks in a burst of glee, and then he began shooting through the open window.

Others followed his example, and a perfect fusillade sounded.

"Here comes one of ther galoots, runnin' right fur ther house!" cried Bug.

It was Cheyenne Charlie.

"Don't drop him, boys!" exclaimed the ranchman. "We will take him alive, too. Git a lariat ready, an' rope him if he puts his head in ther winder. Everybody lay low!"

Cheyenne Charlie surely thought Young Wild West was in great danger when he darted for the house.

The scout was one who would run headlong into anything if he thought the boy's life was at stake.

He had slung his rifle over his shoulder, and with a revolver in either hand he ran up to the house.

Wild heard what the ranchman said, and he resolved to warn his partner.

"Look out, Charlie!" he cried. "They have got me, and they will have you if you come to the window!"

Too late!

Charlie heard his voice, but failed to understand the words.

It only made him all the more eager to get to the rescue of the boy.

Crouching low to the ground, he darted for the open window.

He reached it and failed to hear anything further.

This was because Dan Jones had pressed his hands over our hero's mouth.

"Wild! Wild!" called out Charlie, and then he raised up, and placing his hands on the sill, leaped right through the window.

In order to do this he had put one of his shooters in his belt, and he was holding the other in such a way that he could not use it promptly.

He was quickly caught.

The lariats were brought in play by the villains, and Cheyenne Charlie was soon in the same helpless state as Young Wild West and Billy Egbert.

"I reckon things is comin' our way, boys," said Steve Gluck, with a chuckle of delight. "Now ter git ther gal! I don't care anything about ther rest!"

A cheer went up from the men, which was heard outside by Jim Dart and Totten.

With Wild and Charlie captives in the hands of the cowboy crooks things looked pretty bad!

CHAPTER X.

BUG HINKS AND DAN JONES FARE BADLY.

Wild was sorry to see Charlie come in through the window and full right into the clutches of the villains.

Things now looked pretty black, but he did not give up, by any means.

"This is what I calls putty rough, Wild," the scout said, as he was dragged over to the side of our hero. "I reckon I was a little too fast that time. But I heard you holler, an' I jest lit right through that winder!"

"I called for you to look out," replied Wild. "You could not have understood me."

"No, I didn't hear what you said. I only knowed you was in here, an' in trouble, most likely, so I jest lit in after you."

"Jest shet up talkin'!" spoke up Steve Gluck. "You fellers act as though you was at a picnic, or somethin' like that."

At this juncture Billy Egbert spoke up.

"Steve, for the sake of the old friendship we had let me go, won't you?"

The ranchman looked at him in silence for a minute, and then said:

"I'll let yer go, Billy, on one condition."

"What is that, Steve?"

"Git the consent of your daughter ter marry me."

"She wouldn't do et, Steve, not even if I was willin'," was the reply.

"Then you ain't willin'."

The ranchman asked the question fiercely.

"No, I ain't willin'!"

"An' yet you ask me ter let yer go?"

"Yes; I ask that for ther sake of the old friendship what existed between us."

"Well, I ain't goin' ter let yer go, Bill. I'll tell yer what I am goin' ter do with yer! I'm goin' ter kill yer! I'm goin' ter kill Young Wild West an' ther other feller, too! I'll make a clean job of it now!"

"Frank Totten is takin' ther other pard of Young Wild West ter ther barn," called out one of the villains, who were watching what was going on outside.

"Let 'em go there. It might be that some of yer kin sneak back through ther corn an' git a chance at 'em. Try it! Take 'em alive if yer possibly kin, 'cause I've got a dandy scheme in my head."

"All right!" cried Bug Hinks. "But since ther feller Dart an' Totten is here, ther gal must be alone over in ther gully."

"By jingo! That's so. Two of yer go an' git her. She's hidin' there about frightened ter death, I reckon. She'll be glad ter fall in ther arms of her future husband an' weep with joy."

"Me an' Bug will go an' git her," said Dan Jones.

"All right. Git out to ther stable now, an' jest git Dart an' Totten alive if yer kin. If yer can't, shoot 'em! I've got what law there is in this here part of ther country on my side. They come on my property an' started a scrimmage, an' if they all go under it will be so much ther better. Young Wild West might be ther Prince of ther Saddle an' ther Champeen Deadshot of ther West, but he ain't one, two, three, not when he gits on my ranch!"

There was a hoarse burst of laughter at this sally

Then all but four of the cowboys left the house.

We will follow Bug Hinks and Dan Jones.

They went ahead of the rest, and managed to get their horses without seeing a sign of Jim Dart or Totten.

Mounting, they rode off for the gully at the top of their steeds' speed.

These two men were probably the worst the ranchman had under him.

What they might be guilty of if they took the notion would be hard to tell.

They were without feeling, as far as inflicting pain on others went, and they had not the least respect for the rights of others.

They rode along at a swift pace.

Only once did they turn and look over their shoulders.

And then they found that no one was pursuing them.

They rode boldly up to the spot where they knew our friends had taken refuge.

When they halted and listened nothing could they hear that would indicate that there was such a thing as a human being within a quarter of a mile.

"Ther gal is layin' low," whispered Bug.

"Must be," was the reply of his companion.

The two scoundrels dismounted.

Through the bushes and down into the gully they went.

Then they heard the noise made by horses munching the luxuriant grass that grew there.

They looked at each other and nodded.

"That means that ther gal is here," said Dan Jones. "Totten got some of ther horses, yer know."

"Yes," was the reply.

They reached the bottom of the gully and stood perfectly still for a moment.

Then they started to find the girl.

But they had not taken ten steps when something happened that was entirely unexpected to them.

Something hit Bug Hinks a heavy blow on the head, and he sank down like a log.

Jones uttered an exclamation of dismay, and then——

Whack!

He, too, got one on the head.

Down he went on top of his companion.

Though not rendered entirely unconscious, the two villains were so dazed that they were unable to do anything for the space of a minute or two.

A man sprang upon them, and took their weapons from them before they were aware of it.

"Now, then, Miss Egbert, we'll jest tie these fellers to a tree, so they can't git away," said the man, who was no other than October Gale, the shoemaker.

"All right, Mr. Gale," was the reply. "I will help you all I can. But isn't this awful, though! I never had an idea that there were such scoundrels to be found here in the West."

"I reckon here's where you'll find 'em, if you find 'em anywhere," said the shoemaker! "There! I reckon that feller won't be able ter do any more mischief."

He had Dan Jones tied hard and fast.

But Bug Hinks was now regaining his faculties.

He did not mean to remain a prisoner in the gully if he could help it.

By a desperate effort he got upon his feet and sprang to the spot where they had left their horses.

His action must have been unexpected to Gale, for he got to his horse before he could be stopped.

A cowboy can mount quickly under almost any conditions.

Bug was in the saddle in a twinkling.

"Don't you dare ter go away!" cried the shoemaker, pointing a pistol at the villain.

Bug heeded not the injunction.

With a yell of defiance he urged his horse forward and left the gully.

Crack!

October Gale fired.

He meant business, but his aim was very bad.

Bug Hinks did not even hear the hum of the bullet.

Once on the level stretch he felt that he was safe.

But his weapons had been taken from him, so he stood no chance to rescue his companion.

Suddenly the villainous cowboy thought of the men that had gone under in the fight.

They all had weapons.

A couple of hundred yards off to the left two bodies lay.

He headed for them for the purpose of getting the weapons that were on them.

But at that moment he happened to look in the direction of the barn.

Then it was that he found that a new danger confronted him.

Jim Dart and Frank Totten were riding that way with the speed of the wind.

Bug Hinks jabbed his heels hard against his horse's flanks, and the animal bounded forward like a shot.

"I've got ter git hold of a shooter putty quick, or I'm a goner!" exclaimed Bug, turning pale. "Now is ther time when I've got ter fight fur my life!"

He measured the distance with a practiced eye, and found that he could reach the spot he was heading for before the two could head him off.

It does not take a broncho long to cover a distance of two or three hundred yards.

Bug got there and quickly slid from the saddle.

Then he found a revolver in the belt that was about the waist of one of the slain cowboys.

He grabbed it with joy.

A few feet from the other body lay another six-shooter.

Bug got this, too.

Then he mounted and rode off to the left, hoping to make a circle and get away from Dart and Totten.

But they were after him, and they did not mean to let him escape.

Jim had a rifle, and as he did not attempt to shoot the villain, it must have been that he wanted to take him alive.

They were now within fifty yards of Bug.

Becoming desperate, he raised one of his shooters and pulled the trigger.

Click!

That was all!

There were no cartridges in the chambers.

With an oath, the villain thrust the useless weapon in his pocket, and drew the other one.

Pointing it at his rapidly approaching pursuers, he pulled the trigger.

Click!

The result was the same as the other.

Both revolvers had been emptied before their owners went down.

Bug threw the weapon from him in disgust.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a mocking laugh from Frank Totten, while Jim Dart remained silent.

"We are going to take you alive!" the latter called out a minute later. "We want you!"

Then Bug gave it up, relieved at the thought that he was not to be killed outright.

"I ain't done nothin' ter you fellers!" he cried out, as he brought his horse around and faced them. "Let me alone, can't yer?"

"We can let you alone, but we don't propose to!" was the grim reply from Jim Dart. "We want you! We will make it so hot for you that you'll wish you never was born before we get through with you, you big hulking scoundrel!"

It so happened that Jim and Totten had not seen the two villains ride over to the gully.

They had been just in time to see this one riding toward them.

When they saw him turn and ride for the spot where the two bodies lay they did not know what he was up to until he seized the revolvers.

Then they easily understood that he had been unarmed.

But just why he had been unarmed they did not have any idea.

It made little difference, however.

Jim was in a desperate state of mind just now.

Wild and Charlie were prisoners in the ranch house, and he knew it.

He meant to try and effect their release through Bug Hinks.

"Sit right where you are!" he commanded. "Don't you dare to dismount! Totten, just step up and tie him on."

The cowboy obeyed with great alacrity.

"Now bind his arms to his sides."

This was also done.

"Pass the lariat through the rings that hold the bit of the bridle and lead the horse behind you. Every time the horse lags the scoundrel will feel the rope drag upon him. He will help the animal to move ahead, I guess, when he feels himself pulled over on its neck."

The face of Bug Hinks was almost as white as chalk now.

Jim and Totten were about to start back toward the house with him when they heard some one shouting to them.

Turning, they beheld October Gale at the edge of the timber that fringed the gully.

"I've got one of 'em here!" shouted the man. "He's tied to a tree."

"All right," answered Jim. "Just keep him there till we come back. Don't let him get away, now!"

"You bet he won't git away. That feller you've got did afore we could tie him."

They now proceeded for the tree near the house.

"How many are there left of you, Bug Hinks?" Jim asked.

"There's about 'leven of us, I reckon," was the reply.

"Well, there won't be any in an hour from now if Young Wild West, Cheyenne Charlie and Egbert are not released!"

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S REMARKABLE FEAT.

Wild and Charlie remained perfectly cool while their villainous captors watched from the windows to see what would happen when their companions got to the barn.

Wild knew that he and Charlie would be watched the closest by the five who remained in the house.

Egbert was reclining on the floor almost behind him.

While the villains were looking outside he thought it would be a good time to try and get loose.

"Egbert, have you got sharp teeth?" he asked in a whisper.

"Putty sharp, I reckon," was the reply.

"Well, chew the rope loose from my wrists, then."

Egbert gave a start.

Nothing like that had occurred to him before.

Our hero moved just enough to give him a chance, and he began at the rope.

Egbert felt that it was a matter of life or death, so he went at the rope with a vengeance.

Chewing a tough piece of bear meat was hardly to be compared to it.

But he realized that he must be quick about it, so he chewed away regardless.

The rope was tied in a double flat knot—one that is very secure—but it was not a hard one to untie, not by any means.

In just about half a minute Egbert had the first knot untied.

Then he went at the next one.

This, too, yielded to the tugging he put upon it with his teeth.

Wild felt his bonds loosen.

Then as the ranchman gave an excited cry, and pointed out of the window, he pulled his hands free.

Without attempting to untie the rope about his ankles, he turned to Cheyenne Charlie and quickly set his hands free.

Then, as one of the cowboys turned and glanced at them, they both put their hands behind them.

They had an excellent opportunity after that, for the events that were taking place outside were quite enough to hold the attention of their captors.

There was a knife sticking in the wall almost directly over our hero's head, and hanging to it was a powder horn.

Wild wanted that knife to finish liberating himself and companions.

He began gradually raising to his feet.

At length he made a supreme effort, and got both knife and powder-horn.

Down he sank, just as Steve Gluck cast a quick glance that way.

But the boy got his hands behind him so quickly that the scoundrel failed to note that anything was wrong with his prisoners.

He was destined to be a badly surprised man pretty soon!

It had not taken Bug Hinks and Dan Jones long to ride over to the gully.

At the very moment that Wild succeeded in getting the knife and powder horn Bug was being made a prisoner by Jim Dart and Totten.

The five villains in the house were watching what was going on with no little anxiety.

Bug was one of his best men, and the fact that Jones had not come out told them that something had happened to him.

This they could tell easily, since Bug came in such a hurry.

"Somethin' has gone wrong," said the ranchman, loud enough for the prisoners to hear him. "Jones has been caught by some one in ther gully. An' now Bug has gone an' got caught by Totten an' ther other pard of Young Wild West. What in thunder is ther matter with ther rest of ther boys! Why don't they go out there an' riddle them two galoots?"

Then the cowboy crooks saw the shoemaker show himself, and they could account for the disappearance of Jones.

"Things is goin' wrong," said the ranchman. "They ain't as bright as they was a little while ago."

A feeling of joy came over Young Wild West.

Somehow he was pretty sure that things were coming his way again.

Two minutes later the rest of the cowboy crooks came back into the house.

They all seemed anxious.

"What in thunder is ther matter with you fellers?" roared their boss. "Why didn't yer catch them two galoots?"

"We couldn't find 'em," was the reply from one of them. "We wasn't goin' ter rush right up ter where we thought they was an' let 'em down some of us afore we knowed it. Ther first thing we seen of 'em they was ridin' off ter meet Bug. What in thunder is ther matter out there, anyhow? Somethin's dead wrong."

"I reckon so," was the rather mild reply.

Gluck evidently saw that he could gain nothing by being harsh to his followers.

The three prisoners were totally free now.

Acting on a sudden thought, Wild rolled a piece of paper in the form of a taper, and removing the stopper from the powder horn, put it in it.

There was probably three or four ounces of common gunpowder in the horn, and he meant that it should give the villains a scare.

When the rest of the crowd came in they did not notice that the bonds of the prisoners were cut, since the ropes lay over their ankles and their hands were behind their backs.

In fact, the cowboys did not pay much attention to them, anyhow.

"I reckon I know what them fellers is up ter," observed the ranchman, after a pause. "They are goin' ter offer ter trade their prisoners fur ourn."

"An' if they do it'll be best ter do it," said the fellow who had spoken when they came in.

"I don't know about that. Young Wild West oughter die!"

Wild thought it time to act now.

He had a match in his hand, ready to strike it, and the next minute he scratched it on the floor.

The sulphur became ignited at once, and lighting the improvised fuse of the powder horn, he threw it at the feet of the men.

It must have been that the paper burned very quickly, or that the powder fell toward the end of the horn, for it hardly struck the floor when there was a muffled report, and the room was filled with smoke.

Yells and cries of fear and consternation went up from the crowd of crooks, and they tumbled over each other in an effort to get out.

"Come, boys!" said Young Wild West, making for the kitchen. "Hurry up!"

Charlie and Egbert scarcely needed to be urged, especially the latter.

Egbert was almost as badly frightened as were the villains.

It was wonderful to him.

The coolness and daring of Young Wild West amazed him.

The three got out into the kitchen with little trouble.

On a table lay the weapons for them to see them.

They made a grab for them, and then hastened out into the open air.

The old woman was outside, shrieking as though she had suddenly gone mad.

"Whoopee!" shouted Cheyenne Charlie, as loudly as he could.

Jim Dart heard the cry.

"This way!" he shouted.

Wild saw and heard him at the same time.

The horses Frank Totten had brought from the gully were still with them, though the cowboy was riding Wild's sorrel yet.

Some of the frightened villains came out of the kitchen door, and some tumbled out of the windows.

Singed and burned from the explosion, they were almost frantic with fear.

Wild could not help laughing.

But Charlie did not laugh.

He paused long enough to fire three or four shots at them, and then back in the house they went.

Up dashed Jim and Totten with their captive and the extra horses.

The cowboy quickly turned the sorrel over to the young deadshot.

"Now, boys," said our hero, coolly, "we must finish cooking the crooks. I would be content to ride away and leave them if they had not arranged to kill me. They must be punished and made to quit this part of the country, ranch or no ranch!"

At that instant a puff of flame and smoke came from a window of the middle room of the ranch house.

The explosion had ignited something combustible in the room, and the house was now on fire.

"Great gimlets!" yelled Charlie. "Now we'll cook ther crooks for fair! We'll roast 'em!"

Wild could not see any need of keeping Bug Hinks a prisoner, so he ordered him cut loose.

"You go in the house and tell the gang that they won't be allowed to come out of the house until they make up their minds to crawl out on their hands and knees!" he said. "They must beg for mercy, or they need expect none."

Bug was glad to get off so easy.

He dashed straight for the kitchen door and found the bunch of frightened men huddled there.

Nancy, the housekeeper, had taken refuge in the milk cellar.

Dense clouds of smoke came from the windows of the house now, and it was quite evident that it was doomed.

"Boys, ther jig is up!" cried Bug Hinks, as he entered the kitchen and stood before his singed companions.

"What in thunder is ther matter, anyhow?" asked Steve Gluck, looking about him in a dazed way.

Bug closed the door of the middle room, so the smoke would not interfere with them.

"Don't you know what's ther matter, Steve?" he asked, with just the least tinge of sarcasm in his voice.

"No!" was the reply.

"Well, Young Wild West an' his pards is outside, an' Frank Totten an' Egbert is with 'em. Ain't that plain that we're goners unless we do as they want us to?"

"What do they want us ter do, Bug?"

"We've got ter go out on our hands an' knees an' beg fur mercy, or we'll either stay here an' be burned up or git riddled with bullets."

The wind happened to be blowing away from the kitchen part of the house, so it would be the last to succumb to the flames.

The flames had eaten their way to the ceiling and through it, and just then a portion of it came down with a crash.

The structure was as dry as tinder, anyhow, and there happened to be just enough wind to fan it.

"If we could only git ter ther cellar we'd be all right," said the ranchman, casting a frightened look about him.

"That wouldn't amount ter anything," Bug answered. "I'm goin' ter crawl out on my hands an' knees putty soon an' beg for mercy. I ain't no hog; I knows when I've got enough. We oughter not done what we have, anyhow."

"That's a nice way ter talk now, ain't it?" shrieked the ranchman, flying into a fit of rage. "You're goin' ter squeal at ther very time yer ought ter fight, hey? Well, I reckon this is my property, an' I'll die fightin' fur it!"

A feeble cheer went up from some of the cowboys.

They were of such a deceiving nature themselves that they could not believe that Young Wild West would let them off, even if they did crawl out on their hands and knees and beg for mercy.

They knew they deserved an ignominous death, and they expected to get it if they gave themselves up:

There were just nine of them in the kitchen.

The tenth man of the survivors of the scrimmage was a prisoner in the hands of October Gale, the shoemaker.

"How many is goin' ter stick ter me an' fight it out agin them galoots outside?" roared Steve Gluck, drawing his revolver.

Just four of them declared they would stick.

The other four, the leader of whom was Bug Hinks, said nothing.

Bug seized a revolver from the belt of one of the men when he saw his boss look at him threateningly.

"My life is worth more than yourn, Steve!" he said, in a voice that was remarkably calm, considering the circumstances. "If you try ter stop me from savin' it you'll go under!"

"What!" cried Gluck.

"I mean jest what I say, Steve."

The ranchman raised his shooter to drop the man he had considered to be his right bower but a few moments before.

But one of the cowboys, who was of the same kind as Bug, struck it from his hand.

"Have a little sense, boss!" he cried. "Don't yer hear ther cracklin' of ther flames? Ther first thing yer know ther fire will be here. Then we'll have ter go out. It is better ter give in than it is ter fight. If yer try ter fight you'll go down, jest as sure as two an' two is four. You all know that Young Wild West an' his pards never miss when they fire. Be reasonable, boss!"

But Gluck would not have it.

By a desperate effort he threw the cowboy aside and rushed at Bug Hinks.

Then Bug fired and the boss dropped with a bullet in his right arm.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

October Gale was watching from a position in front of the gully when the explosion took place.

"There's ther dickens ter pay over at ther ranch-house, Miss Egbert!" he exclaimed. "Come up here an' look! I reckon ther cowboys won't come back here very soon. If they do, we'll mount an' ride fur Silver Shy."

The girl came up from the hollow tremblingly.

She was just in time to see Young Wild West, Cheyenne Charlie and her father come out of the house.

"Oh, they are saved!" she cried.

But when he found that they did not come, and that the house was on fire, the shoemaker became anxious to go over.

"I guess there can't be any danger there now, Miss Egbert," he said. "Let's go over. Most likely ther scoundrels is all dead."

He assisted the girl to mount, and then led his mule up from the hollow.

The mule would not travel faster than a certain gait, so the girl had no trouble keeping up with him.

"I reckon our prisoner will be there when we git back," said Gale, as they rode along. "If he ain't it'll be mighty funny!"

Young Wild West and his companions sat on their horses, waiting for the villains to leave the burning house.

It was just as Bug Hinks fired the shot in the kitchen that Gale and Jennie rode up.

Then out of the door of the kitchen came five men crawling on their hands and knees.

"My!" exclaimed the shoemaker, "what's that fur?"

"That is the way I told them to come out," answered Young Wild West. "But that is not all of them."

After the shooting of their leader the rest of the cowboys must have become convinced that it was better for them to go out on their hands and knees.

The door to the adjoining room was on fire now, and it would only be a question of a very few minutes before they would be forced out by the smoke.

Just as the fire reached our friends the rest came out. Steve Gluck fetched up the rear, and used but one hand to do his crawling.

Our hero waited calmly until they were all in front of him.

"Now, then, you scoundrels, what are you going to do about it?" he said.

"We've come ter beg fur mercy," answered Bug Hinks.

"Will you promise to behave yourself in the future if we let you go?"

"Yes, I hope I may die if I don't!"

"All right. You can get up."

Bug got up joyfully.

"Go on over to the barn."

Wild asked the same questions of all of them, and they answered the same.

The ranchman was the last one.

He promised as fervently as any of the rest, and when Wild told him to get up he did so in a painful way.

"You have been shot, eh?" asked our hero.

"Yes. Bug Hinks give it ter me in ther shoulder 'cause I wouldn't agree ter give in ter you fellers," was the retort.

"Kin I go now?"

"Just wait a minute. Do you own this ranch?"

"Yes, free an' clear."

"Do you think you can sell it?"

"Yes, I knows a man who would buy it right away if he got ther chance."

"All right. You go over to him and sell the ranch just as soon as you can. For when the people over there find out what you have been up to they may take a notion to lynch you. This part of the country is not big enough for you any longer."

The defeated ranchman walked away.

He had scarcely walked over to the stable to get his horse when a horseman was seen approaching.

"Who is it?" Jim asked Frank Totten.

"Ther dominie from Silver Shy," was the reply.

The good man rode up and showed great surprise when he saw them standing there before the rapidly burning building.

"Where is Mr. Gluck?" he asked.

"Mr. Gluck has made up his mind to leave here for good," our hero answered.

"Is that so? Why, he arranged with me to come over and marry him to the young lady who arrived last night."

"Well, the young lady Gluck wanted to marry is right here, and so is Frank Totten, who is now right at her side. Neither of them have anything to speak of, as far as money or worldly goods are concerned, but if they will make up their minds to hitch up I'll see to it that they get a place to live and earn their living."

"Say yes, Jennie!" exclaimed her father. "I know Young Wild West would not recommend anything but that was right an' proper."

"Oh, I don't want the couple to get married unless they think enough of each other to do it," Wild assured him.

Jennie plucked up courage and said:

"I'll take the chances of marrying Frank Totten, if he wants me to, and I'll do my best to make him a good wife."

"Whoop!" yelled Totten, throwing up his hat. "Now I reckon all I want is a good job! Hooray fur Young Wild West, fur he's got me a wife!"

"There is no need of delaying the thing," said Wild. "Go ahead and tie the knot, dominie. Then we'll all ride over to Silver Shy and have a banquet at the hotel."

It did not take long to pronounce them man and wife, and then everybody present kissed the bride.

"Well, let's git back to ther gully," observed October Gale. "I almost furgot that there's another of ther cowboy crooks there. We'll have ter 'tend ter him, ther same as ther rest has been 'tended to."

"Certainly!" exclaimed Wild. "Come on, everybody!"

As they rode away the cowboys came out and looked at them in silence.

When they reached the gully they found Dan Jones just in the act of mounting the horse that had been left there.

The villain had managed to free himself, and was going to ride away.

"Stop right where you are!" cried Young Wild West, as he got upon the horse.

Crack!

Jones fired point-blank at the boy, but divining his intention, Wild ducked in time to escape the bullet.

Crack!

It was Young Wild West who fired this time.

"There goes the most dangerous of all the cowboy crooks!" he said, as Dan Jones dropped with a bullet in his brain.

An hour later Young Wild West's party rode into Silver Shy and stopped in front of the hotel.

Steve Gluck, with his arm in a sling, was just coming out.

He appeared frightened, but Wild called him and asked him how he had made out.

"It is all right," he answered. "I've sold ther ranch an' got ther money. Ther buyer knows all about ther house burnin' down. He's goin' ter put up another one right away an' work things fur all they're worth. Good-by, all! I'm goin' ter start life anew, I am!"

That was the last they ever saw or heard of Steve Gluck.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE ARIZONA ATHLETE; OR, THE DUEL THAT LASTED A WEEK."

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WEEVIL LOSS IN GROCERY STORES.

Grain weevils are costly pests, not only in mills and elevators, but frequently damage food in groceries and other mercantile premises, and are likely to give even more trouble there than in mills, because merchants do not understand how to protect food against weevils or are unable to use the fumigating methods possible in mills—only a store away from living quarters can be safely fumigated. A grain trade journal advises grocers to keep flour, meal, rice, peas, beans, and package cereals in a cool, dry place, as without heat and moisture the weevil will not propagate. Proximity to a heated stove will often cause weevils to appear in winter. Scrupulous cleanliness and kalsomining are preventatives. In one case a grocery store was rid of weevils by the use of floor oil. Care should be taken to inspect incoming goods, as a few weevils in a single package of goods may infect the whole store in a short space of time during warm weather.

SOLDIER AND SAILOR INSURANCE.

To the man who has gone to the colors the United States Government offers the safest, the most liberal, and the cheapest insurance on the face of the earth. Approximately 300,000 men have already accepted the Government's offer, applying for insurance of about two and three-quarter billions of dollars. The average amount applied for per man is more than $8,600, which is very close to the $10,000 maximum provided for by the law.

This insurance total, great as it is, should be only a beginning. Every person in the military and naval forces of the Nation owes to himself and to those he loves to avail himself of the full insurance protection. But the time in which he can do so is limited. Prompt action is imperative.

Those who joined the service before October 15, 1917, must apply for the insurance on or before February 12, 1918. After that, it will be too late. The automatic insurance which is provided until February 12, 1918, is only partial protection.

Parents, brothers, and sisters, who have a representative of their family in the Army or Navy should, for their own sake, and for his, write to him at once urging him, if he has not already done so, to buy the Government insurance. They should urge him to buy the full $10,000, and, above all, to buy it now.

NAVY'S CALL FOR BINOCULARS, SPY-GLASSES AND TELESCOPES—"THE EYES OF THE NAVY."

The Navy is still in urgent need of binoculars, spy-glasses and telescopes. The use of the submarine has so changed naval warfare that more "eyes" are needed on every ship, in order that a constant and efficient lookout may be maintained. Sextants and chronometers are also urgently required.

Heretofore, the United States has been obliged to rely almost entirely upon foreign countries for its supply of such articles. These channels of supply are now closed, and as no stock is on hand in this country to meet the present emergency, it has become necessary to appeal to the patriotism of private owners, to furnish "eyes for the Navy."

Several weeks ago, an appeal was made through the daily press, resulting in the receipt of over 3,000 glasses of various kinds, the great majority of much has proven satisfactory for naval use. This number, however, is wholly insufficient, and the Navy needs many thousands more.

All articles should be securely tagged, giving the name and address of the donor, and forwarded by mail or express to the Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, care of Naval Observatory, Washington, D. C., so that they may be acknowledged by him.

Articles not suitable for naval use will be returned to the sender. Those accepted will be keyed, so that the name and address of the donor will be permanently recorded at the Navy Department, and every effort will be made to return them, with added historic interest, at the termination of the war. It is, of course, impossible to guarantee them against damage or loss.

As the Government cannot, under the law, accept services or material without making some payment therefor, one dollar will be paid for each article accepted, which sum will constitute the rental price, or, in the event of loss, the purchase price, of such article.

Toward the end of January it is proposed to distribute throughout the country, posters making an appeal to fill this want of the Navy.

DICK DENTON'S SCHOOLDAYS

——OR——

THE WAR OF THE HIGHS AND LOWS

By DICK ELLISON

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XIII (Continued).

Now do not for an instant fancy that the Lows stood like lambs listening to this long speech.

Nothing of the sort.

It was made in the face of catcalls and hoots from Young Bull's adherents, and many a sneering thrust from Peters himself.

"Hold on!" cried Archie. "I'll propose a compromise. Let Dick and I go back and find the point where we went wrong if we can. You fellows remain here. When we have located the place we'll call and wave our lanterns. If we fail, we return as quick as possible and give Peters a chance to prove what he knows about Old Grim Face."

Whether the boys were willing to agree to that or not could not be easily demonstrated, for all were now talking at once and the result was confusion worse confounded.

"Come along, anyway," said Dick. "They can stop here, or go ahead, or do whatever they blame please."

So the two chums strode off, leaving a squabbling mob behind them, and none followed them.

"Well, this is the worst ever," growled Archie. "I wouldn't have believed that the fellows would go back on you so, Dick."

"I have made a slip," replied Dick. "The moment the confidence of a mob is shaken in their leader down he goes."

"You may well call them a mob. I wouldn't have believed the Lows could make such idiots of themselves."

"All gatherings of boys must necessarily be mobs if not well disciplined. What we need is a regular military company, with daily drill. I'm going to talk to Dr. De Long about it; but we mustn't talk any more now, Arch. If we do, we shall never find the trail."

"And while all this nonsense is going on," sighed Archie, "the Highs have gone ahead and rescued the Irwinites, I suppose."

"Hush! Which way do we turn? Here are our footprints going both ways."

"To the right."

"It seems to me that it ought to be to the left."

"We were blame fools to have ever started without a compass."

"That's what we were. I'm completely turned around."

No one but those who have lost their way in the woods at night can appreciate how easily such a thing can happen.

And when it does happen, it seems as if no two could be of the same opinion as to the way.

Just then Scotty's bugle was heard.

"Hark! They are signaling us," said Dick.

He whistled with his fingers.

"Hey, you fellers!" Young Bull's voice was heard to shout.

"Hello!" yelled Dick, using his hands as a speaking trumpet.

"We are off for the bridge!" bawled the Bull. "When you get tired of mussing around up there you can come on! It will be easy enough to follow our trail."

"By Jove, he has won them over!" cried Archie.

"Looks so," replied Dick, sadly. "I'm down and out."

"Don't you believe it," said Archie. "What's more, I won't have it so. What you want to do is to put Peters in his place; then you will have all the boys at your back again."

"We'll see," answered Dick, and in the meantime we must decide which way to go. The only proper thing to do is to follow back on our original trail."

"I've told you what I think, Dick."

"And I honestly can't help differing from you, Arch."

"That's all right, old man. Suppose we match for it?"

"Agreed."

Each took out a coin.

"Two heads your way, two tails mine, and we keep on matching till we get 'em if it don't take altogether too long," said Dick.

The decision was to be reached right then and there.

Both coins came up heads.

"Your way, Arch," said Dick.

They walked on a short distance.

Suddenly Archie stopped.

"Look here!" he cried. "This trail is all one way."

"There you are. It proves that you were right and I was wrong."

But everybody was wrong that night, it would seem.

The boys were actually going in the direction from which they had just come.

In the disorderly retreat which followed after the Lows turned back, sufficient care had not been observed in following the trail.

The return trail really lay to the right of Dick and Archie as they were now going.

They had covered about a quarter of a mile when they suddenly struck it.

"Wrong, by Jove!" cried Archie in despair. "This is the way we went before."

"So it is," assented Dick. "I declare, I'm willing to give up in despair."

At the same instant a faint cry was heard on their left.

It was a woman's voice! It was a call for help!

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK AND ARCHIE FIND TWO OF THEIR IRWINITES, BUT STILL REMAIN LOST TO THEMSELVES.

"By Jove, Dick, did you hear that?" Archie exclaimed.

"Sure I did!" replied Dick. "We've got business on our hands now!"

"Hello! Hello! Help here!" he shouted. "Can—you—see—our—light?"

"Yes!" came the answer.

"We will help! Call when we tell you to!"

"All right!"

"Hello now three times! Then wait!"

The hellos came.

"This way," said Dick.

But it was easier to say "this way" than to go in the direction Dick started then.

Great broken masses of rock were here piled up in every direction.

It was evident that they were now going right up the face of the mountain.

"We can never do it," panted Archie. "We shall break our necks. Ask them who they are."

This Dick had not stopped to do because the voices sounded so near that it seemed to him that it could only be a matter of minutes before reaching the speakers.

"Who are you?" he now called.

"Two of the Misses Irwins' pupils!" came the answer. "Who are you?"

"Two of Dr. De Long's pupils. Are you lost?"

"Yes; we have been lost for hours. We are almost dead with cold. Help us if you can."

"Well, by thunder!" muttered Archie. "If this isn't a cinch! The very thing we wanted, Dick."

"You bet!" assented Dick, greatly excited. "If everything had not twisted itself the way it did, we should not be here now. It beats the band. I wonder which of the Irwinites they are?"

"Ask them?"

"No, no! It wouldn't be just polite."

"We are coming to you if we can!" he shouted. "Fact is, we are lost ourselves."

"Oh, dear! What shall we do?" they heard one of the girls say.

The voice sounded right above them.

Dick raised his lantern as high as he could get it.

"I see them!" he cried.

Directly in front of them rose a cliff about twenty feet high, upon the top of which they could see the two girls standing.

Still they could not make out faces.

The ground between where the boys stood and this cliff was very steep and covered with broken rock.

There appeared to be almost no snow here for some reason—probably at this particular point the wind had blown it away.

The boys scrambled on as best they could.

There were several tumbles emphasized by screams from the girls, but nothing serious occurred.

At last they gained the foot of the cliff, and found themselves seemingly at the end of their rope, for the perpendicular rock extended on both sides as far as they could see with their lanterns.

"May we ask your names?" called one of the girls. "It would be easier to talk if we knew."

"Certainly. I am Dick Denton. My companion's Archie Rounds."

"Perhaps you know us?"

"We cannot see your faces. The light don't strike up far enough."

"I am Lilly Ladd. It is Fanny Follensbee who is with me."

The answer caused a flutter below.

Lilly Ladd was Archie's favorite among the Irwinites, as has been mentioned.

Secretly Dick considered Fanny Follensbee the prettiest girl he had ever seen, although he had not mentioned the fact to anyone.

"How did you manage to lose yourselves?" he called.

"Well, really we don't know!" replied Fanny Follensbee. "We were botanizing, collecting specimens of the little plants which remain green among the dead leaves all winter. In some way or another we did lose ourselves. After we had exhausted every means to get back to Miss Frisbee and our companions, we started to come down the mountain, for night was closing in. It is no use to go over the dreadful things that have happened to us, Mr. Denton, but in the end we found ourselves here, and as we could go no further, we had just resigned ourselves to spending the night on this dreadful rock when we saw your lights."

"I suppose you don't know that your whole party is still on the mountain," said Dick.

"No, indeed! Is it so?"

(To be continued.)

CURRENT NEWS

A bequest of $20,000 is left for Miss Charlotte J. Werner under the will of Archibald S. Cutler, made public in Meredith recently in the Surrogate's Court at Hunter, N. Y., largely because she humored the testator by playing the piano frequently for him. The testator, who was a retired paper manufacturer, left an estate of $85,000.

Reports from the large chain of Child's restaurants throughout the country show that on each meatless Tuesday the saving of meats now amounts to about 7 tons, as follows: Bacon, 500 pounds; corned beef, 48 pounds; boiling hams, 1,192 pounds; sliced hams, 1,211 pounds; lamb stew meat, 758 pounds; liver, 561 pounds; pork shoulder, 1,453 pounds; pork belly, 116 pounds; beef hips, 7,587 pounds.

Fifteen carloads of Satsuma oranges were blown from the trees by a heavy gale in Alabama recently, whereupon the fruit growers and Mobile soda-fountain men promptly organized to turn this wind-hurt fruit into orangeade for local soda-fountain consumption. This shrewd conservation step led to the shipment of samples of fruit juice to manufacturers and preserving factories in the North and East, with a view to utilizing such waste in future emergencies.

The Lakewood Hotel, at Lakewood, N. J., has been taken over by the Government as a hospital for convalescent soldiers. The property is a substantial brick structure, contains 400 rooms and is considered almost fireproof. It has a power plant, stables, and a twelve-acre park, making it ideal for the purpose in view. The Government expected to take the property over some time after January 10. The hotel will be remodeled so that it will provide accommodations for from 3,000 to 4,000 patients. A new base hospital is to be built at Camp Mills, N. Y., at an estimated cost of a million dollars.

A coal pile at Superior, Wis., containing 100,000 tons, caught fire some time ago and burned three weeks despite every effort to extinguish it. This fire was finally brought under control by J. A. Thomas of Columbus, Ohio, who used a special type of engine with bicarbonate of soda. On arrival of this engine, which was brought from Columbus, he estimated that 400 barrels of soda would be needed. Only 24 were available. With this supply of chemical he succeeded in extinguishing the fire in one section of the pile inside of two hours. Coal fires have been especially bothersome this season, says the Black Diamond, and this method seems to deal with them effectively.

Wheatless Wednesday has brought a pie problem to hotels and restaurants, for, while substitute cereals can be used for bread and rolls, many cooks have found it difficult to make pie crust without wheat flour. John Willi, pastry chef of the Hotel Sherman, Chicago, after many experiments, says the Hotel Monthly, has evolved the following formula for a wheatless pie flour: Eight pounds cornstarch, 8 pounds corn flour, 6 pounds butter, 4 ounces sugar, 4 ounces salt, 8 pounds butter, 4 pounds lard, 8 quarts water. Butter and lard may be replaced with a vegetable shortening. Some chefs have cut down the daily consumption of wheat for pastry by serving deep-dish and open-face pies. The deep-dish pie is made without a bottom crust, and the open-face pie without top crust.

California is a larger producer of barley, more than 35,000,000 bushels being the 1917 crop in the Sacramento Valley. Three months ago there were but a few barrels of barley flour in California, and those had been imported from abroad for the making of infant food. But Sacramento has started a barley flour industry, milling many thousands of barrels in September, and the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce has launched a campaign to promote the manufacture and consumption of barley flour as a substitute for wheat. Among the products now handled in the trade are barley flour, barley brown bread, barley pancake flour, and barley flakes, groats, and grits. Analysis of California barley flour at the University of California indicates that it compared very favorably with the flour from California white wheat.

In an unusual way, nature helped the city of Redlands, Cal., to construct drainage-ditch banks which proved strong enough to restrain the floods that for several seasons had devastated fields adjoining the artificial channel. It was after various futile attempts to strengthen the banks of the ditch, built to carry off water in the rainy season, that the city engineer proposed erecting a barbed-wire fence back of which brush would be piled. Railroad ties were first used as posts in constructing this fence, says Popular Mechanics, but later substituted by cottonwood posts, thereby saving the city about 10 cents per post. These were obtained from the material trimmed from the city's cottonwoods, at the time the fence was being made. The new barrier proved effective and, during the second season, as some had anticipated, the cottonwood posts began to sprout and now they are thriving trees which not only strengthen the walls of the drainage ditch but also add a touch of beauty to an otherwise barren landscape.

FROM COLLEGE TO MEXICO

—OR—

THE WHITE GIRL QUEEN OF THE YAQUIS

By "PAWNEE JACK"

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER VII (Continued).

"What about this, anyhow, Tom?" queried Bob.

"What do you mean, Bob?"

"I mean—are we going to try to find and secure this fortune?"

Tom was silent a few minutes, during which time he looked thoughtfully at the wall.

"If I was sure that this is all straight, and that there really is a fortune there," he said, presently, "I would be in for going after it, Bob, old fellow."

"Well, don't you believe that Greaser Joe told the truth, and that the gold is there?"

"I am inclined to think so, yes. That is to say, I feel certain that it was there, at one time; but the question is, is it there now?"

"Well, that is something that we cannot know."

"You are right. The only way to learn the truth would be by going there and seeing for ourselves."

"And if the gold is there, the longer we put off going, the more likely it is that somebody else may find the fortune, Tom!" It was evident that Bob was excited and eager to go in search of the hidden fortune.

Tom looked at his friend keenly.

"I believe that you want to go, old fellow!" he said.

"You are right, I do. I tell you, a fellow don't have many such chances as this, Tom!"

"That is true, sure."

"Let's go and see if we can find the gold, Tom!"

"But—what about leaving college?"

"We ought to be able to go down there into Sonora, Mexico, secure the gold and get back, all within the space of a month."

Tom nodded.

"We might do so, if we had good luck," he agreed. "But, even if it took us much longer, it would pay us, if we succeeded in finding the treasure."

"So it would. Well, I am in favor of going at once, for if we should wait till this term is out, and went down there in the vacation season, it might be to find that we had waited a bit too long."

"We might find that someone else had got there ahead of us, eh?"

"Yes."

The two boys eyed each other for a few moments in silence, and then Tom said:

"If we decide to go, we had better go to the professor and take him into our confidence and get him to give us a vacation of one month, hadn't we?"

"Rather than to simply skip right out without leave? Yes, I think that will be the better way."

"So do I; for whether we are successful in securing the fortune, or not, we will want to come back to college."

"Yes, indeed."

"Then it is decided that we are to go?"

"That's for you to say, Tom."

"Well, I think it is a good idea, old fellow. We will go, and at once."

Bob extended his hand.

"Here's my hand, Tom. We will go together, and if luck is with us we will return together, and bring the fortune with us."

They shook hands on this.

"I rather expect that there will be danger connected with the expedition, Bob."

"No doubt of it."

"We will have to be careful; and it will be best not to let anybody down in Mexico discover what we are there after."

"You are right. They wouldn't want to let us bring the gold away, if they knew about it."

"No, indeed."

"Which will be the best way for us to go, Tom? By the way of El Paso?"

"Yes; and on west to Benson, in Arizona, and thence south into Mexico by way of the Sonora Railway."

"It runs to Guaymas?"

"Yes."

"And when we get to Guaymas?"

"We will buy or rent a boat and go up the Yaqui River to the east end of that range of mountains."

"To the point where the red cross is, eh?"

"Yes."

"All right. But, do you think we have money enough?"

"I guess so. I have three hundred dollars."

"And I have three hundred and fifty."

"That ought to be sufficient."

"I think so. I don't want to write home for money, for they would ask what I have done with what I had."

"Same here, old fellow."

Then they got out a map of the United States and Mexico, and examined it carefully.

They decided that the route they had spoken of was the best one.

They sat there and discussed their plans an hour longer, and then got in bed and tried to go to sleep. This they found to be a difficult matter, however, for their minds were very active. At last, just as the little clock on the mantel chimed the hour of twelve, they dropped off to sleep.

When they got up, next morning, they looked at each other, and Bob said:

"It's a go, eh, old man?"

"Yes," nodded Tom.

"Good! You will see the professor?"

"Yes, as soon as the afternoon session is over."

"And this evening we'll go and see Vivian and Aline and tell them we are going away."

"Yes, Bob."

"They'll be surprised."

"They will, for a fact."

CHAPTER VIII.

A SURPRISE FOR THE STUDENTS, AND THE GIRLS.

When the afternoon session was ended, Tom Archer went to the study of Professor Morton, who greeted the youth pleasantly and invited him to be seated.

"What can I do for you, Tom?" he asked.

"I have come to ask for a leave of absence of a month, sir," was the reply.

"Ha! A leave of absence, you say?" staring in surprise.

"Yes, sir—for myself and for Bob Wilson as well."

The professor placed the ends of his fingers together and stared at Tom over the top of his spectacles.

"This is, ah, rather irregular, my boy," he said.

"Pray advise me regarding this business. You must understand that I cannot grant such a favor blindly. You must bring forth cogent reasons or else I cannot listen to such an unheard-of proposition."

"Very well, Professor Morton; I will tell you all, and then I feel certain that you will be willing to grant us the leave of absence."

"Go on with the story, my boy; then, as you say, I shall be able to render a decision."

Tom went ahead and told his story. He told about the story of "Greaser Joe" regarding the hidden treasure, and showed the professor the map of the place where the gold was concealed.

When he had finished, he paused and sat there looking eagerly at the professor, who on his part was looking thoughtfully at the floor.

Tom was anxious, for he feared that the professor might refuse to grant the leave of absence.

"Well," said Professor Morton, presently, looking keenly at Tom, "I have decided to grant the favor your ask."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" cried the youth.

"After giving the matter careful consideration, I have come to the conclusion that there is a good chance that the story of Greaser Joe is true, and that the treasure was hidden in the cave, as he stated; the only question is, has it been found and carried away?"

"I thought of that, sir. I think, however, that the other members of the robber band must have been killed or imprisoned by the government of Sonora. And if that is the case, then the probabilities are that the treasure is still there."

"You may be right, my boy. I hope that you are."

"So do I, sir."

"When will you start?"

"As soon as possible; to-morrow, perhaps."

"What are you going to tell your fellow students, to account for your going?"

"That we have been called away on business."

"I see."

Tom talked with the professor a while longer, and then, thanking him again for granting Bob and himself leave of absence, the youth bowed himself out and hastened to his room.

"It's all right."

"He said we can go, eh?"

"Yes."

"Now, the next thing is to go and tell the girls, eh, old man?"

"Yes; we'll go around there this evening."

"Are we going to tell them regarding the business that is taking us away?"

"They'll keep the secret, all right."

"Yes, indeed."

"We'll go to-morrow, Tom?"

"Yes; we want to get away as quick as possible."

"All right; let's pack our grips."

"Very well; we will just about have time to do that before supper is ready."

They went to work at once, and were hard at work, when the door opened and Bert Spellman stuck his head through the opening.

He stared in amazement.

"What in the world are you fellows doing?" he exclaimed.

"Packing our grips, can't you see?" replied Bob.

"Yes, but what are you doing that for?"

"We're going away."

"What!" Bert stared in open-mouthed amazement.

"That's right," nodded Tom.

"Where—when—why?" I don't understand!"

"We are called away by business," said Bob.

"Important business," added Tom.

"Well, well! Say, this is sudden, isn't it?"

"Rather sudden," acknowledged Bob.

"Where are you going?"

"To-morrow."

(To be continued.)

INTERESTING TOPICS

ARABIAN PERFUME.

The Arabs around Aden love powerful perfumes and are highly skilled in their preparation. Their favorite is called "oodi." It is made from a wood called "ood" and is so powerful that when burned in incense-pots the smoke will impregate the garments of those present to such an extent that the perfume will remain upon them for days, even after they have been laundered. They often mix "ood" with civet, ambergris and musk, and thus perfume their clothes.

The Germans tried to sell their perfumes at Aden, but failed, as the best they could do was about 43 cents an ounce for perfume not nearly so good as that which the natives made for 8 cents.

MANY BLIND IN CHINA.

Blindness is profitable in China, according to Professor George B. Fryer, of Shanghai, Superintendent of a school for the blind, now studying the work among the blind of America.

"There are more blind in China than in any other country in the world," says Professor Fryer, "not excepting Egypt. One in every four, it is estimated, is blind. The blind beggars along the streets and roadsides are a nuisance, but they make a very good living. By doing a good deed the Chinese believe they are absolved from their sins, and few of them pass a blind beggar without giving him a coin. The beggars get $30 or $40 a month, which is a good sum in China. Many of the blind also have taken up fortune telling."

Most of the work for the blind has been done by missionaries and by the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, which find their problem difficult, as any effort to mitigate the evil runs counter to Chinese religious beliefs.

SIX SONS AND ONLY DAUGHTER IN WAR, MAN OFFERS SELF.

Although he has given six sons to the army and his only daughter to the Red Cross, James McCullock, former San Francisco mining man, who now lives in San Diego, doesn't think he has done enough for his country.

Although in his seventies, McCullock has written to Western department headquarters to determine if there is any branch of Government service he can fit into. He is willing to serve in any capacity in which he may be of use, he says. He is a mining and timbering expert.

McCullock is well known is San Francisco. His fortune was wiped out by the fire in 1906. After that reverse he moved to Southern California, where he has since resided.

Five of McCullock's six sons are in the American service. Two of these are in the aviation section of the Signal Corps. One of his birdman sons recently arrived in France.

The sixth son has been serving for some time with the Irish cavalry. He was recently wounded in action.

Although the only daughter is still in America, she expects to be at the front with her Red Cross unit in a short time.

BABY MISTAKES SNAKE

Mrs. Richard D. Corder placed her little daughter Mildred in her go-cart in the front yard of their home, near Lawrenceburg Junction, Ind., and sat by the front window to watch her.

She saw a large black snake crawl into the cart and nestle on baby's pinafore. Darting its head here and there the blacksnake intently watched the baby.

Probably the infant thought a new toy had come and put out its chubby hand to grasp the snake, which eluded the child.

Terror nearly paralyzed Mrs. Corder. She could not move, but she uttered a shriek.

Mrs. Charles W. Corder, her sister-in-law, who was calling on her, ran to her, and she pointed to the baby cart. Mrs. Charles D. Corder rushed out, seized the snake by the tail, and flung it yards away, and the baby began crying for its pretty new toy.

A CHEMICAL ELECTRIC TORCH.

One of the most novel of the many electric torches recently invented consists merely of a wide-mouthed bottle having rods of zinc and carbon inserted through a rubber cork. These rods project down into the bottle for about one-third of its depth. On top of the cork a small electric lamp is mounted, similar to those used in ordinary electric torches. Connections are made between the lamp and the zinc and carbon rods.

A mixture of water, bichromate of potash and sulphuric acid is put into the bottle, and stands at a level of about 1 inch below the end of the zinc and carbon rods when the bottle is upright. When the bottle is turned upside down it becomes what is known as a bichromate cell, a well-known type of cell for producing quantities of electricity for electric bells and similar devices. The electric current produced when the solution surrounds the zinc and carbon rods is strong enough to light up the lamp, and the apparatus becomes an electric torch. The cork of the bottle must, of course, be made perfectly water-tight, says Popular Science.

Square bottles with large round mouths, such as are used for pickles and similar products, are very suitable for these torches, as they can be laid down on their sides when light is required.

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Good Current News Articles

When Spot, a pet fox terrier, pulled the sheets off the bed, Henry Simmons, a farmer of Neenah, Wis., awoke to find his bedroom filled with smoke. He was just in time to put out a fire caused by an overheated stove downstairs in his kitchen.

Miss Anna Ansberry, a comely woman of twenty-seven, has been made Marshal in Veedersburg, Ind. She knows how to shoot and can wield a club with powerful effect. She has served notice to all law violators that she will uphold the law and will see that the city is properly policed.

Incidents of the German Christmas, according to news from across the frontier, were women and children beggin for food in the snow-covered streets, and riots in some of the towns. Only the rich enjoyed a good, but ordinary dinner, and for this they paid high prices, as much as $50. Most of the churches were closed owing to lack of coal.

It was recently stated by Charles M. Schwab that the capacity of the shipyards controlled by the Bethlehem Steel Corporation is a 10,000-ton vessel about every five days. This organization expects soon to have in its employ between 120,000 and 130,000 workmen. Its output of war material greatly surpasses even that of the great Krupp works.

As a result of the policy adopted by the United States Bureau of Fisheries of furnishing the skins of sharks and other fishes to persons who wish to experiment with these products, more than 40 tanners have had an opportunity to give them a trial, and several companies are now in the market for the hides of sharks and porpoises. Some cabinetmakers in this country still use the skins of certain sharks for polishing purposes. The skins that heretofore have been used are those of one of the European sharks. The Bureau of Fisheries is now determining whether the skins of some of the sharks on our coasts are not well suited for this purpose.

Since Italy entered the world war the Pope and his entourage have been working at a great disadvantage. For while the Vatican has maintained a strict neutrality, it has endeavored to maintain its usual relations with the Central Empires and the Entente countries, and this has not always been simple because of its location in a belligerent nation. At present there is a movement on foot to install a powerful wireless station at the Vatican in order that the Catholic Church will be in a position to communicate directly with any of the countries at war, without subjecting the despatches to the censorship of the belligerent nations.

Grins and Chuckles

Stern Parent—Aren't you ashamed to be at the foot of your class, Harry? Small Harry—Why? The foot's the foundation, isn't it?

"Now, Johnny," said the Sunday-school teacher, "can you tell me one of the most remarkable things Moses did?" "Yes, ma'am," replied the bright youth. "He broke all of the commandments at the same time."

Little Harvey—Mamma, has your tongue got feet? Of course not. What made you ask such a silly question? Little Harvey—I heard papa say your tongue was running all day long, and I wondered how it could run without feet.

"I wish you would tell me what the trouble is with this watch," said the customer, handing it to the jeweler. "The trouble," said the jeweler, looking at the number of the timepiece and referring to his ledger, "is that I haven't been paid for the cleaning I gave it two years ago."

"Didn't I tell you to take the ax an' cut wood enough to keep the house warm?" "Yes; but hain't you been preachin' this long time about the preservation of the forests?" And thereupon the old man wore out two fence rails on him, and told him he was too young to understand that politics didn't mean all it said.

Mr. Ryley—Why are yez decoratin', Mrs. Murphy? Mrs. Murphy—Me b'y Denny is comin' home the day. Mr. Ryley—I t'ought it wuz for foive years he wuz sint up? Mrs. Murphy—He wuz, but he got a year off for good behayvure. Mr. Ryley—An' sure, it must be a great comfort for ye to have a good b'y loike that!

"Why don't you make more effort to placate your enemies?" "What for?" inquired Senator Sorghum. "So that they stop antagonizing you." "My friend," answered Senator Sorghum, "in this business a man must expect to be antagonized. I think I have a set of political enemies now that I can hold down and a don't intend to disturb the situation."

THE MAHOGANY BOX.

By Paul Braddon

"Bad luck to-day, good Bruno, bad luck. What we are to do next, old fellow, I cannot imagine—can you?"

Peter Fairfax was the speaker, and he gave a great sigh as he looked down upon a noble specimen of a Newfoundland moving along at his side.

Old Bruno glanced up at his young master's face as if he knew what had been said, and then hung his head as if he felt sad, too.

"Our mission has been a fruitless one," continued the boy. "We will be driven from our home, and heaven only knows what will become of mother then. Miser Hessling is indomitable, immovable, and he's a villain."

With the last word Peter brought his foot down hard upon the earth, and at the same time brushed a great tear from off his fair cheek.

The dog licked the hand of the youth, as if in full sympathy with him.

Wearied with a long walk, Peter reached home just as the sun was setting behind the great hills that stretched in a long line at the westward, just as the shadows of night began to flit across the fertile valley in which Widow Fairfax lived.

He was met at the door by his mother, who wore an anxious look upon her wan, yet handsome face.

"Your sad countenance betokens ill news, my boy," said the dame with tremulous voice. "Nothing was accomplished, I fear."

"Nothing, mother. Miser Hessling said you must leave the farm within a week, or he will eject you at the hands of the sheriff."

"You told him of the papers that were lost with the mahogany box?"

"Yes; all that you directed me to say, and much more that I knew myself."

"What said he in reply?"

"That you lied, mother!"

Mrs. Fairfax sank into a chair at this and covered her face with her hands, while her frame shook with deep emotion.

"I'd have knocked him down if I could!" cried the lad, and he strode up and down the room for a minute with clenched fists, then went to the window and gazed out upon the fast fading twilight with a vacant stare.

Peter was a boy of but fifteen years. He was intelligent and plucky, and as he stood beside the casement that night resolutions for future action were firmly formed.

Mrs. Fairfax had been a widow but a few months. Three years before, she, with her husband and Peter, an only child, twelve years of age, had emigrated from New York cultural pursuits.

At the time of taking up their abode in the West the inhabitants of that section of the country were frequently annoyed by thieves, who made daring robberies, carrying off whatever of value they could lay their hands upon.

Houses were entered and pilfered in a mysterious manner, and not the slightest clue could be obtained to the perpetrators of the crimes.

Large rewards were offered for the apprehension of any one of the robbers, dead or alive, but this availed nothing, as no one could trace the bandits to their lair.

Shortly before the death of Mr. Fairfax his house had been entered, and among other things a mahogany box taken, in which were all the jewels the family possessed and all the valuable papers.

The day before the robbery the farm had been paid for in full, and a receipt taken of Zebulon Hessling, commonly called "Miser" Hessling, from his parsimonious propensities, and a deed was to be properly made out and delivered.

The loss of the papers by the robbery had reached the ear of Hessling, and this, followed by the death of Mr. Fairfax, gave the old villain an opportunity to defraud the widow and her son, and he was not slow in setting about the accomplishment of his nefarious purpose.

As no proofs existed of payment having been made, Mrs. Fairfax saw herself at the mercy of Miser Hessling.

Peter stood silently by the window for many minutes; finally he started, as if awakened from sleep; he crossed the room, and taking a position beside the matron's chair, said in a gentle voice:

"Mother."

Mrs. Fairfax looked up, and putting her arm around the youth, drew him close to her.

"What is it, my son?"

"I am going to leave you for a few days."

"Going where?"

"Away to Coridon."

"It is fifty miles away, Peter."

"I know that, but I can make it in two days on foot, transact my business in one, and return inside the week you are allowed on the farm."

"What is the mission, Peter?"

To get the position once offered me as an apprentice. If we are to depend upon my hands for support hereafter, the sooner I am earning something the better. I can get board, clothes and fifty doldars, the first year. This money, with what we can sell of personal property, will keep you in comfortable circumstances, and after the first year I shall receive much more."

Mrs. Fairfax did not oppose the boy, and aided his preparations for an early start on the morrow.

Old Bruno was with him, but Peter had promised to send the dog back after crossing the big hills to be a protection to his mother.

The youth took a straight line toward Coridon, guided by a pocket compass, and stopped not to follow the newly-laid and public highways.

Long before noon he reached the most wild and desolate part of the "White Rock Hills," as they were called. He was walking upon the margin of

a deep, rocky cut or gorge, when old Bruno came bounding up to him, manifesting a good deal of excitement by barking lustily.

"What is it, old fellow?" said Peter, snapping his fingers at the dog.

Bruno dashed away a few rods, then came bounding back, as if he would lead his master in another direction.

The youth knew the traits of the animal so well that he felt certain something of interest had been found, and although it would detain him a little, Peter determined to indulge the faithful brute this time.

"Lead the way," cried the boy, "and I'll follow."

So Bruno bounded down the steep enclosure and his master scrambled down after him.

When they had reached a point about midway between the brow and the base of the gorge old Bruno suddenly disappeared as if by magic.

Soon he reappeared through a fissure in the rock which was entirely hidden from view by a clump of close-growing bushes.

"Cubs or young foxes in there?" asked Peter.

Bruno's only answer was a bark, and he again disappeared from sight.

Laying down his bundle, our little hero followed the dog into the dark cavity.

Moving cautiously down through a narrow, uneven fissure, he soon found himself in a spacious cavern, into which just sufficient light stole to show that the walls were some twenty feet apart.

After his eyes became more accustomed to the darkened chamber, Peter saw that he was in the abode of some human being.

The sight that met his gaze made his heart stand still for a moment. Here were piles of heavy silverware upon the floor and in boxes. Niches in the walls contained gold and silver coins, watches, rings and pins of every description.

Peter was completely bewildered. What could it mean?

In the corner were piles of small caskets and jewel cases, and while staring at these in amazement his eyes fell upon an object that made him cry out for joy—there was his mother's mahogany box.

He seized the treasure, and the lock being broken, the lid yielded readily to his touch.

"Here are all the papers and treasures," he said in a hoarse, tremulous whisper. "I will take them directly back to my mother. This is a den of thieves and the depository of their plunder. I will——"

His soliloquy was cut short by the darkening of the cavern and a low growling from Bruno.

Looking up, he saw before him a large, dark-faced man, dressed in a hunter's garb, with slouch hat.

"Well, my young lark, what do ye here?" asked the stranger in a gruff voice. "I'm thinking you'll never take that box to your mother; you'll more likely take the news to your father, 'cause dead boys never tell nothing to the living. I'll just open yer windpipe and you'll slip off easy like."

Drawing a huge knife from his belt beneath his hunting shirt, the robber caught Peter before he could make an attempt to escape, and bending his head back he brought the youthful face around beneath his muscular arm, and lifted the keen blade as deliberately to carry his threat into execution as a butcher does to cut the throat of a lamb.

The shining steel descended upon the full, white neck, but before the skin was severed, Bruno, who had been watching with gleaming eyes, leaped like a lion upon the bandit, and setting his huge jaws upon the throat of the villain, brought him down upon the floor of the cavern with such force as to loosen the knife from his hold and send it spinning several feet away.

As soon as Peter sufficiently recovered from the shock to take in the situation he dealt the desperado a blow over the head with a billet of wood sufficiently hard to lay him senseless, and then bade Rover loosen his hold.

After thoroughly binding the ruffian with cords and thongs that were found in abundance, Peter told Bruno to watch him, and taking the mahogany box so as to be sure of its contents, started for home as fast as his legs would carry him.

By the middle of the afternoon Peter returned with a party of men and horses to take care of the robber and the stolen goods.

Bruno still sat on guard, and the villain, who had returned to consciousness, swore lustily at the intruders, as he saw fit to call them.

The desperado was, of course, sent to the proper place for criminals, and a large number of valuables found in the cavern were identified and restored.

Widow Fairfax and Peter were more fortunate and worthy than any of the rest.

The papers of the mahogany box placed them in full possession of the farm, and would have made it very unpleasant for old Miser Hessling had not the widow, in the kindness of her heart, refused to prosecute.

Peter received the large reward offered for the apprehension of the robber and it was the foundation of his future wealth.

No reward could be bestowed upon old Bruno that he could appreciate, save abundance of love and caresses from all who knew the noble old fellow.

What became of the rest of the gang of robbers no one knew; but finding their rendezvous discovered, they fled to other parts.

The cavern became quite a resort for parties seeking the wonders of nature, and bore the title of "Robbers' Cave." And to-day the most prominent names carved upon the soft sandstone walls are those of Peter Fairfax and Bruno.

A new claimant to the honor of having fired the first American shot in France was disclosed at South Bend, Ind., in a letter from Alexander Arch, an artilleryman with the United States troops, to Miss Wilma Szabo, his fiancee. Arch in his letter states that "I am up on the firing line now and sent the first shot over to the Germans

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

BASEBALLS TO TAKE A 25 CENT JUMP IN PRICE.

Baseballs are going to cost more next season than they did in the past, according to dealers in sporting goods. One dealer said that the regulation baseball used by the big leagues which has been selling for $1.25 will cost $1.50 next season.

Other sporting goods, including golf clubs, footballs, golf balls, and tennis racquets also will be advanced in price from 15 to 25 per cent., it was said.

HEIRLOOM LOST.

Caroline Ruben, the little daughter of I. H. Ruben, of No. 1824 Fremont Avenue S., was sitting in her father's automobile on Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis, Minn. Her pet fox-terrier, Trot, was with her.

The little girl was wearing a necklace that had belonged to her great-grandmother. Just for fun she took it off and put it around Trot's neck.

Just by chance Trot saw a dog he didn't like and jumped out of the car and chased it. Trot came back in a few minutes, but the necklace did not.

CARRIES DISPATCHES FROM RUSSIA CHAINED TO HIM.

With dispatches so important that he kept them in a bag chained to him on a trip from Archangel, Russia, Captain C. T. Williams, who is head of the investment department of the Fidelity and Deposit Company, arrived recently on his way to Washington. The dispatches are from the American Ambassador in Russia to the State Department.

Captain Williams is secretary to the American Red Cross and went to Rumania last summer.

Captain Williams started for Rumania in July. Twenty days were consumed in making the trip and the train was frequently attacked by bandits.

SMALL BOY BURNED MAKING A "BOMB."

Eleven-year-old Philip Dominguez, No. 2347 North Galvez street, New Orleans, is nursing a badly wounded face as a result of his experiment with gunpowder. The little fellow had seen older boys of the neighborhood, he said, "shoot cans into the air."

He got a shotgun shell and extracted the powder. He arranged it in the tincan—like he saw the older boys do—and applied the match.

Before the child could draw back his head the powder was ignited and the can shot skyward.

He was knocked unconscious by the blow and was revived by the time doctors from the Charity Hospital arrived. He was taken to the Charity Hospital, where his wounds were dressed and was then removed to a ward for further observation.

INCANDESCENT LAMP WITH RENEWABLE FILAMENT.

A refillable incandescent lamp is a recent new departure. In this lamp, which is of the gas-filled type, there is no need for a vacuum, as it is only necessary to retain the gas in the globe under its own pressure. Accordingly the lamp is so made that the globe can be removed to permit the renewal of the filament, and when the globe is attached to the head the joint is tight enough to retain the gas admitted. Further, in the head is provided an easy means for refilling the lamp with gas.

Upon the filament being rendered useless the globe can readily be unscrewed from the head and the filament withdrawn through the neck of the globe. After a new filament has been substituted the globe can be replaced. At this time, however, it is necessary to recharge the globe with gas. This is done by removing a screw plug and utilizing the hole thus made. Upon the globe being filled with gas it is screwed tightly in and the plug inserted.

BURN MORE WOOD, SAVE COAL.

The Fuel Administration issues the following:

The United States Fuel Administration, in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture, has inaugurated an intensive campaign for the substitution of wood for coal. The action is taken as a means of conserving the coal supply.

In this connection it is announced that the Department of Agriculture will provide the services of expert foresters who will supervise cutting of wood so that no damage may be done to growing timber and that the largest use may be obtained of the supply of wood.

One cord of hardwood is equal to a ton of coal, according to the experts of the Fuel Administration. The Department of Agriculture and the Fuel Administration have statistics showing that there is a vast quantity of dead wood in many sections of the country and that the supply in many communities is sufficient for domestic purposes. This wood in many instances is destroyed as waste.

The Department of Agriculture in its offer to give the services of foresters has made it plain that no expense will be incurred by communities of public-spirited organizations which enter upon a campaign of wood substitution.

In the wooded sections of New England and in the South there are vast supplies of wood. Activities are already under way in the South looking toward an intensive campaign for the substitution of wood. The use of convict camps is being urged in some localities as means of collecting wood, where the labor of convicts could be utilized without interference with free labor.

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

$50,000 WHISKEY CARGO FOR "DRY" STATES TAKEN.

Five thousand quarts of Kentucky whiskey, destined for Christmas consumption in "bone-dry" Alabama and Tennessee, is in possession of the Federal authorities at Louisville, Ky. The seizures have resulted from examination of suspicious packages carried by travellers and parcels at freight depots.

The value of the seized liquor in a large Tennessee city, where it is said to retail covertly for $40 a gallon, would be approximately $50,000.

OVERCOAT SAVES MAN.

H. R. Heyser, of Louisville, Ky., had a narrow escape from death the other morning. He left a westbound Market street car by the front door at Twelfth street. His overcoat caught in the gates, and he was dragged almost to Thirteenth street before the motorman became aware of his plight and stopped the car.

Mr. Heyser's legs were dragged along the track, but luckily his overcoat held and he was saved from being mangled. His back was bruised and he was internally hurt. He is sixty years old and his condition is serious.

SCIENTISTS TO UTILIZE GAS FOUND IN MINES.

Millions of feet of burnable gas that, under scientific handling, might be used as power-plant fuel are being thrown into the atmosphere daily from the anthracite coal mines in the vicinity of Scranton, Pa., and throughout the coal fields generally.

This gas, "methane," made up of one part of carbon to four parts of hydrogen, is drawn from the mines by the fans that provide fresh air for the workers, but as it is expelled from the fan shafts it is mixed with so much air as to render it unburnable in that mixture.

Scientists are trying to evolve a method for corralling the gas-laden air and adjusting the air mixture so as to place this enormous amount of energy at the command of industry and release hundreds of thousands of tons of coal now used in the mining regions to other markets.

BOY OF 12 MAKES HARD AUTO TRIP.

A twelve-year-old boy reached Los Angeles, Cal., the other night in a Velie Six, after driving half way across the continent—a feat never before performed by one so young. The boy's mother and brother of ten years were with him, but not once in the long, difficult journey did either of the other members of the party hold the wheel. In fact, Mrs. Donovan said she did not know how to drive and that she undertook the trip in full confidence of the lad's ability to handle the car properly.

The roads became increasingly difficult between Great Falls, Mont., and Salt Lake, whereupon the boy, Carl, decided upon Arrowhead Trail as the best route to follow southward. At the crossing of the Virginia River the county maintains a man with a mule team to help cars through a treacherous quicksand. Not knowing of this service, young Donovan shot his Velie across, and was in the midst of the sandy whirlpool before he realized it was quicksand.

Applying every ounce of power, he was able to struggle out and climb the opposite bank, where he met the muleteer, who said that to his knowledge it was the first time a car ever had attempted to cross the stream under its own power.

REGULATIONS FOR PASSPORTS TO UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

The American Ambassador at London has received the following from the British Foreign Office:

"It is hereby notified that all persons proceeding to the Union of South Africa must be in possession of passports issued or visaed by a competent British authority. British subjects embarking from the United Kingdom must carry valid passports issued in London. Persons not British subjects must carry passports issued by their own authorities and visaed by the passport office. All persons embarking from foreign countries for the Union of South Africa must first have their passports visaed by a British consular officer in the country of embarkation."

DIAMONDS IN TEXAS.

Much excitement has been caused among the people of Central Western Texas over the discovery of gems, believed to be diamonds, upon a ranch eighteen miles southwest of Sterling City. An account of the discovery is given by F. Kellis, County Surveyor of Sterling County. He writes as follows:

"About thirty-two years ago a well driller encountered a substance that cut his drill bit. The well was finished and the driller drifted away. One day a cowboy picked out of the borings of the well some pretty rocks and showed them to a jeweler, who paid him $800 for one of them, a black stone. The cowboy some years later met the driller in Seattle, Wash.

"They related to each other the facts about the find. The driller told the story to Chicago parties, who came here with the driller last winter and started a prospect shaft, following the bore of the well. The shaft is now eighty-three feet deep. At the start the formation was conglomerate. At about eighty feet a blue clay 'dope' was struck. In this formation they are taking out some beautiful pebbles. Some are black translucent, while others are white transparent and very hard."

LUCKY PENNY POCKET PIECE.

This handsome pocket piece is made of aluminum, resembling somewhat in size and appearance a silver dollar. In the center of the pocket piece is a new one-cent U. S. coin, inserted in such a way that it cannot be removed. (U. S. laws prevent our showing this coin in our engraving). On one side of the pocket piece are the words, "Lucky penny pocket piece; I bring good luck," and the design of a horseshoe. On the opposite side, "I am your mascot," "Keep me and never go broke," and two sprigs of four-leafed clover. These handsome pocket pieces are believed by many to be harbingers of good luck.

Price 12 cents; 3 for 30 cents; by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC MIND READING.

Wonderful! Startling! Scientific! You hand a friend a handsome set of cards on which are printed the names of the 28 United States Presidents. Ask him to secretly select a name and hold the card to his forehead and think of the name. Like a flash comes the answer "Lincoln, Washington," or whatever name he is thinking of. The more you repeat it the more puzzling it becomes. With our outfit you can do it anywhere, any time, with anybody. Startle your friends. Do it at the next party or at your club and be the lion of the evening. This was invented by a famous magician.

Price, with complete set of cards and full instructions, 12 cents, mailed, postpaid.

C. BEHR 150 W. 62d St., New York City

THE SPIDER WEB PUZZLE.

A very interesting little puzzle. It consists of a heavily nickeled plate and brass ring. The object is to get the ring from the side to the center and back. This is very hard, but we give directions making it easy. Price, 10 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

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383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

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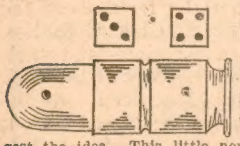
Made of fine rubber, with bulb on one end and inflator at other. Place it under a table cover, under plate or glass, and bulb is pressed underneath, object rises mysteriously; 40 inches long. Price 25c., postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

The Bottle Imp.—The peculiarity of this little bottle is that it cannot be made to lie down, and yet by simply passing the hand over it, the performer causes it to do so. This trick affords great amusement, and is of convenient size to carry about. Price 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

DICE BULLET.



This Bullet and contents will afford you lots of "game." Not, however, the kind of game usually "got" with bullets. The illustration may suggest the idea. This little novelty consists of a real shell fitted with a hollow "bullet," and contains two small bone dice. This will make a very acceptable gift to any of your soldier friends. Each 15 cents, by mail, postpaid.

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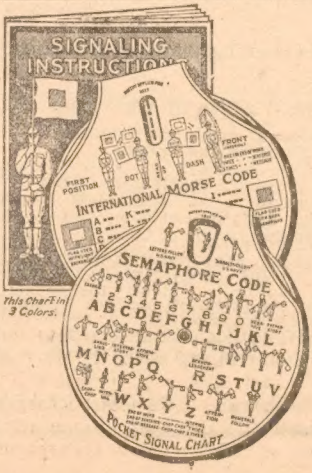
WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

SHERIFF BADGE.

With this badge attached to your coat or vest you can show the boys that you are a sheriff, and if they don't behave themselves you might lock them up. It is a beautiful nickel-plated badge, 2¼ by 2½ inches in size, with the words "Sheriff 23. By Heck" in nickel letters on the face of it, with a pin on the back for attaching it to your clothing. Send for one and have some fun with the boys.

Price 15 cents, or 3 for 40 cents; sent by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



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Four cards are placed in a hat. One card is removed and the balance are now shown to be changed to blank cards. The cards can be thoroughly examined.

Price 10c, by mail, postpaid.

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These dancers are set in a gilt frame, the size of our engraving. By agitating a match and moving it in circular form at the back they can be made to dance furiously, the heat from the match warming them up. If you want to see an up-to-date tango dance send for this pretty charm.

Price, 15 cents, or 3 for 40 cents, sent by mail, postpaid.

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IMITATION BED BUGS.

This toy is an exact imitation of the friendly little fellow who shares your bed, eats out of your hand or leg and who accepts your humble hospitality even without an invitation. The fact that he also insists on introducing all his friends and family circle, sometimes makes him most unpopular with the ladies; most every woman you know would have seven kinds of fits if she saw two, or even one, of these imitations on her bedspread. Six are contained in a transparent envelope. Price 10c by mail.

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Diamond rings or studs of half-inch and one inch in diameter are heard of in stories only. We have them imitated by prodigious sparkling stones which will deceive the glance of any spectator. Price, by mail, postpaid, small size, 25c each; large size, 35c each.

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This is the latest novelty out. The mouse is of a very natural appearance. When placed upon a mirror, wall, window or any other smooth surface, it will creep slowly downward without leaving the perpendicular surface. It is furnished with an adhesive gum-roll underneath which makes it stick. Very amusing to both young and old. Price, ten cents by mail.

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This joke spike is an ordinary iron spike or very large nail, the same as is found in any carpenter's nail box. At the small end is a small steel needle, ½ inch in length, firmly set in spike. Take your friend's hat or coat and hang it on the wall by driving (with a hammer) the spike through it into the wall; the needle in spike will not injure the hat or garment, neither will it show on wall or wood where it has been driven. The deception is perfect, as the spike appears to have been driven half-way through the hat or coat, which can be left hanging on the wall.

Price, 10 cents, or 3 for 25 cents; by mail, postpaid.

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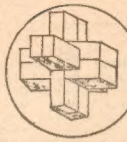
MIKADO BLOCK PUZZLE.



Imported from Japan. This neat little puzzle consists of six strangely cut pieces of white wood unassembled. The trick is to so assemble the blocks as to form a six-point cross. Price 12c. by mail, postpaid.

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MONGOL PLAYING CARDS.

An exact imitation of a pack of the finest quality playing cards in a very neat case. You hand the package to your friend, requesting him to shuffle the cards, and as he attempts to do so a cap inside expuodes loud enough to make him see stars. Price 25c, by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

TOKIO CARD TRICK.

You place five cards in a hat. Remove one of them and then ask your audience how many remain. Upon examination the remaining four have vanished. A very clever trick. Price, 10, by mail, postpaid, with directions.

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